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ABSTRACT

This handbook for teachers and parents discusses approaches for helping elementary and secondary school students understand and write poetry. Chapter 1 discusses various elements of expression such as words, thought, movement, and language. Chapter 2 discusses early poem-making and includes discussions of children's acceptance of language, steps in the making of a book, and children's poetry in general. Chapter 3 discusses developing writers, naming objects, and imagining. Chapter 4 discusses writing with older students in middle schools and senior high school. Such topics as what to write, imitation, cleverness, writing with formulas, and various activities for teaching poetry are discussed. Chapter 5 is a bibliography listing helpful aids in the teaching of writing, as well as the names of major American poets. Chapter 6 includes a collection of poems written by children. Chapter 7 gives additional pointers for the teaching of poetry. (TS)

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A FEEL FOR WORDS

MAKING POETRY IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
A Handbook for Teachers and Parents

RICHARD FRICKS
1971-73 Poet-in-the-Schools
Hamilton County School System
Chattanooga, Tennessee

The Poetry-in-the-Schools Program is a joint program of the local school system, the Tennessee Arts Commission, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the U.S. Office of Education, Arts and Humanities Division

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Richard Fricks

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A friend of ours, one Terry Melton who is as dextrous with words as with his paint brush, has said that to write about children's poetry is as hazardous as trying to write about a sunset when you're in the middle of it.

If any one person could with precision write on this subject, it would be the author of this book who, throughout his two-year stint as Poet-in-the-Schools in Hamilton County, Tennessee, was able to meet on their own terms kids from kindergarten to high school, and even adults, inspiring from them flights of fancy, cascades of words, and figures of expression that they themselves could not believe was theirs when typed in black and white.

In this book he has distilled his observations and experiences in an endeavor to help teachers and parents everywhere share the excitement he has found when a youngster discovers the savor and vigor and wonder of the words of his language—when he actually does write about his own personal sunset that he's in the middle of. It is the wonder of language, the "Feel For Words" that Richard Fricks is opening the door to—not the making of a poet in any formal or conventional sense. For, if the door can be opened, poetry as a creative expression follows.

We have been privileged to have Richard Fricks as a part of our Poetry-in-the-Schools Program. This book will let us share that privilege as he becomes a part of your own Poetry Program.

—Gordon Holl,
Arts Programs Director
Tennessee Arts Commission

PARTICIPANTS IN THE POETRY-IN-THE-SCHOOLS PROGRAM IN TENNESSEE, 1971-1973

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for
Jenny, Dennis, Paul

I would like to thank the good teachers who have taught me. They are Kate Elliot, Donald Cheatham, Roland Carter, Gail Hammond, Paul Ramsey and Wilhelm Pauck.

I am indebted to two humanists, Marie Hughes and Frances Minor. Dr. Minor gave me support and helped me to focus when I needed it most. She has a concern for children which through her teaching and consultation has strengthened all the people with whom she has worked.

My work in Hamilton County, Tennessee, would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of Margaret W. Cooper, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Mildred Major, Language Arts Resource Teacher; and Larry Malone, General Curriculum Supervisor. Classroom teachers of particular help to me were Minnie Lee Morgan, Ora Russell, Mim Johnson. Dorothy Pfitzer introduced me to several important books which are included in the bibliography.

Especially, I want to thank Gordon Holl of the Tennessee Arts Commission for his friendship, his support of my work in the Hamilton County Schools, and his support of my writing.

This list of thank-yous could continue uninterrupted for several pages, but I shall stop it here with one further thank you and it is for Andrina Briney, State Supervisor of Reading, and her Living Curriculum and Read-In, Write-In, Speak-In programs.

INTRODUCTION

When I am in the kitchen I abhor recipe books. This is not a formula book for the assembly line production of poetry—we are supplied with an overabundance of these "cookbooks." This book contains some of my thoughts on writing and learning with children. It is, in the main, a collection of their work and I hope it communicates to you, the reader, some of the joy I have experienced in my work with the students of Hamilton County, Tennessee. I have worked in more than three hundred classrooms in the past two years. The teachers and students have taught me a great deal—I hope I am able to pass some of this on to you.

I prepared this book for the classroom teacher, but I also see it as a help to the parent in the home. The classroom teacher, the system of public education, depends upon the home and the attitudes engendered there. The first chapter of this book is concerned with language—language development and language as it is found in thought, emotion, movement and in words themselves. It is a basic survey of our language in relation to ourselves and covers my understandings as they have developed in my work with children. At the core of the book is an extensively researched bibliography including selections of books for teachers and parents, books of children's writing, and books for students of all ages.

In the classroom, I have found two ends without the middle. The child does not benefit, nor does society benefit, from rigid structure and inhibitions on every hand as found in many classrooms where the teacher serves as *the* authority, *the* ruler; or, the reverse, where the teacher sits behind the scenes watching the children destroy the classroom. The teacher's role should be that of a guide—showing the student possibilities, pointing out, providing labels, enriching language and experience, providing limits and helping the student to structure his world. It is my hope that this book will point the teacher toward some of the possibilities.

Richard Fricks
Rising Fawn, Georgia
1973

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master—that's all."

—Lewis Carroll

"What kind of a bird are you if you can't fly?" chirped the bird.

"What kind of a bird are you if you can't swim?" replied the duck.

—Sergei Prokofiev

I.

WHAT LANGUAGE DO YOU SPEAK?

The Elements of Expression

What Language Do You Speak?

I wish I were a thang in
the dark I wold hide
behind a tree.
And comme out from the
tree wene somme wone
seped in fron of me'

take arms against a sea of troubles'

i will try to write you a few
lines to let you no that im
as well as common hope
this will find you all
the same im like the
Lonsom Dove' flying
from pine to pine'

A dead man I will call for help'

seize me
imprison me
within the lines
or hold me captive
between
that I may live
forever'

Did you at any time during the taxable year, have any interest in or signature or other authority over a bank, securities, or other financial account in a foreign country (except in a U.S. military banking facility operated by a U.S. financial institution)? If "Yes," attach Form 4683 (For definitions, see Form 4683.)[5]

Last summer before an approaching storm, Jenny and I walked along the Gulf beach at Biloxi, hunting for hermit crabs. We had intended a swim, but the lightning contented us with beach-combing. I walked ahead a short distance on the beach where, beside an abandoned pier, I discovered a cache of the creatures. I shouted, "Look! Look! See the hermit crabs! See! See!" Jenny burst out laughing reporting to me that no one was supposed to speak like this; why, in fact, only recently, they had killed Dick and Jane, Alice and Jerry, and rewritten all the primary readers.

Your language is you. The words you utter are you.

---

[1] *Tim Morgan, age nine.*

[2] *A Shakespearean mixed metaphor. Shakespeare's language is alive with broken rules, but, then, there were no rules—he had no grammar books to consult.*

[3] *C. M. Chapman, age seventy-four.*

[4] *An interesting and intelligent construction by an anonymous first grader from a remedial reading class.*

[5] *Helen Wortman, age seventeen.*

[6] *Internal Revenue Service, Form 1040, 1972.*

But do we utter only words? Or, do we speak thoughts? When answering "yes" to the question "Do you like grits?" aren't we answering, "Yes, I like grits"? *Yes* indicates nothing by itself without the accompanying thought—the completing thought. Children of three answer "No" to every adult utterance. *Yeses* and *Noes* are stoppers and starters—framers. For every word we speak there is a cluster of words surrounding it, and for every one of these words in the cluster about the primary word there are additional clusters. This associative property of language enables us to respond in both a meaningful manner (meaningful to the other) and a personal manner (meaningful to the speaker).

Communication on an intelligent level can be defined as the crossing of two private encounters with the world—the publicizing of association. We meet and, to the degree that our private images become public ones, we speak. Barriers are everywhere at such a meeting, but a vigorous mind characterized by curiosity (to paraphrase Dr. Johnson) is eager to investigate these barricades.

When you see the word, *frog*, what comes to mind?

I think of a princess, of the colors green, yellow, red and black. I think of lily pads and ponds, of biology lab with Eleanor McGilliard, of tadpoles. I think of tongues, of hopping, of warts and witches. These images could fill out the remainder of this page, for around each of these there is another cluster and another and another and another. . . .

ELEMENTS OF EXPRESSION

I have a feeling for a watermelon.
I have a feeling for a pony.
I have a feeling for animals.
I have a feeling for a boy.
I have a feeling for a cat.
I have a feeling for a dog.
I have a feeling for Daddy.
I have a feeling for Mother.
I have a feeling for everything.
The world makes me happy.
Everything in the world makes me happy.
You can sit in the world.

—Paul C., age eight.

Thoughts—can one think, can one create, can one express himself without words? For purposes of argument, thought and emotions can be separated—one may maintain that thought requires words, but the edges blur when feelings and words are juxtaposed. In everyday conversation we often misapply the phrases "I think",

"I feel". Can one have thoughts without words with which to express them? Can one have feelings without words with which to express them? Maybe the Platonic division of mind and body is a sensible one.

Imagine a child's crying. The primal cry is a gut-level expression of disruption. Now, suppose one were observing the child—he cries softly, he is afraid, lonely, sad; he screams, he is hurt, injured; he screams-falls-upon-the-floor-kicks-pulls-his-hair, he is angry; he whimpers, he frets, he has an earache. The scream propels us. It is our first speech.[1] A new mother soon is able to distin-

[1] *In a new-born baby we now can distinguish the cry of a brain-damaged infant from that of a non-damaged infant by the higher (usually unvaried) pitch.*

guish a hunger cry from a pain cry, a wet-diaper cry from an I've-dropped-my-rattler-on-the-floor cry. There is indeed such a thing as articulate screaming. And we often revert to this speech when our feelings spill over into our intellect. But the cry by itself does not say to us what is wrong—suppose you are walking down the school's hallway and you meet a good friend who comes up to you and begins to cry uncontrollably; until this crying friend is able to stifle the tears and to speak, you will be unable, most likely, to discern the reason(s) for this behavior. (Strawberry ice cream may be discounted as the cause, but no, it so happens the friend had strawberry ice cream for lunch and after beginning the dessert she remembered her mother, recently deceased, who had asked for strawberry ice cream on her death bed.)

Thought-words-feeling, they are intertwined. And they are expressed in movement of the tongue in conjunction with the vocal chords or in the movement of the eyes, the arms, the fingers. Our lives are manifested in movement and the cessation of movement is death.

WORDS

An infant enters the world with basic phonemic possibilities—that is, if all the equipment is functioning, the baby has programmed within him given sounds. The early production of coo's and goo's and ma's and da's are

soon turned into ma-ma, da-da, bye-bye with a little coaxing from delighted parents. This sort of development seems very natural to us—the baby babbles, the parent babbles back; the baby smiles, the parent returns the smile. Long before the baby is able to converse with words an entire language of grunts and monosyllabics is reinforced by the parent-guide's mediations between the infant and the surrounding world, and by the lengthy monologues on the parent's part. And, if the parent is a good parent this speaking is further backed up with: pinches, pats, spanks, tickles, pat-a-cakes, and this-little-piggy-went-to-market.

The language spoken around the child determines the combinations of the basic phonemic possibilities.

FOOT-TOES

1. This little pig went to market;
2. This little pig stayed home;
3. This little pig had roast beef;
4. This little pig had none;
5. This little pig cried,
"Wee, wee, wee!"
All the way home.

EYE-HAND

Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker's man!
Bake me a cake as fast as you can;
Roll it and pat it and mark it with "B"
And put it in the oven for baby and me.

DIRECT-APPLICATION-TO-THE-SEAT
(OF KNOWLEDGE)

Ride a cockhorse to Banbury Cross,
To see a fine lady upon a white horse.

Rings on her fingers, and bells on her toes,
She shall have music wherever she goes.

HOLD-ME-TIGHTLY-AND-DO-IT-AGAIN!

Rock-a-bye, baby, on the tree top!
When the wind blows the cradle will rock,
When the bough breaks the cradle will fall;
Down will come baby, cradle and all.

Words are powerful instruments: *And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field. (Genesis 2:19f.)*

After the animals were gathered around the man it was necessary to get down to the business of naming them, for if a man was to "have dominion" he must be able to name his domain.

Today, when we disavow public ritual, we still hold to the ritual of introduction, we exchange names in a formal ceremony. The establishment of control, of some form

of control, of rapport is the naming of the world around us and the naming of ourselves. Now, we can turn the coin over and examine the other side. Side One is called, "We name the world in order to control it." Side Two reads, "The names we give control us." I see through naming. If I am taught as a child the Ptolemaic nature of the world, the universe, my world is completely different—a completely different world than if I had learned the Copernican nature of the arrangement of the heavenly spheres.*

Names, words, ideas control us. For what I call you determines my reaction to you. Words and the clusters floating around them determine my world.

As a child, when told the old cliché, "the pen is mightier than the sword", I envisioned a large plume walking about jumping over Three Musketeer swashbucklers, laughing at them; or, rather, since I have a difficult time with vowel sounds—pen, pin—I probably wondered how a straight pin could have more power than a sword. My difficulty does not deny the saying. What dictates the sword?

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* *Consider what happened after Copernicus, Galileo, Rousseau, Diderot, Pain, Jefferson, Nietzsche, Marx, Rachael Carson.*

Words are stronger than swords, ideas dictate which men to kill and which to spare. But words as the conveyers of culture, of ideas are also much weaker than the sword, so fragile. Caesar lighted a match and burned the Greek mind to the ground. My favorite story of words is a Chinese one:

Words often obliterate time, establish time-sequence, or completely disjoint our sense of timing. An ancient Chinese emperor, Shih Wang Ti (c. 250 B.C.) decided history should begin with him. The tribes from the North were pushing in upon him, so he constructed the Great Wall. His restructuring was on the Napoleonic order and apparently was more successful and certainly more monumental. He would stop movement with his Wall. Along with his building, he burned—he burned documents, scrolls, books, manuscripts. All books published before his reign were systematically burned. He destroyed words in order to stop history and to restart it. Imagine all books in the libraries beginning with Copyright 250 B.C., produced, directed, caused to be written, and published by Shih Wang Ti.[9]

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[9] *See Franz Kafka's, "The Great Wall of China" for an interpretation of the meaning of the Wall. Also see,* The Poems of Mao Tse-tung, *translations by Willis Barnstone and Ko Ching-Po. In this book, Barnstone writes an excellent summary of Chinese history. New York: Bantam, 1972.*

The Gnostic hymn which John uses to introduce his Gospel provides me with a powerful illustration here—"*The word became flesh.*" The *logos*, the idea of word, became a tongue, became personified, became movement.

The cleverness of such an illustration is soon dissipated when the idea of word = flesh, flesh = word is considered seriously. Substitute "child" for "flesh" and the equation takes on a new meaning. Rather than the idea of flesh and spirit, it is the substantive being, the child, who intrigues me and through this child we can understand "flesh" and "spirit" and "word."

Earlier, I cited some nursery or Mother Goose rhymes as examples of the appropriate place for poetry to begin, but, now, let us look at other Mother Goose rhymes, investigating the ideas they call up. Here are two examples of cultural roles bound up in simple nursery rhymes:

1. *What are little boys made of?*
   What are little boys made of?
   Snakes and snails, and puppy-dogs' tails;
   And that's what little boys are made of.

2. *What are little girls made of?*
What are little girls made of?
Sugar and spice and all that's nice:
And that's what little girls are made of.

Do not these words establish roles, learning patterns, essentials, non-essentials? Or, take this verse:

Monday's child is fair of face,
Tuesday's child is full of grace,
Wednesday's child is full of woe,
Thursday's child has far to go,
Friday's child is loving and giving,
Saturday's child works hard for its living;
But the child that's born on the Sabbath day
Is blithe and bonny, and good and gay.

Suppose Monday's child had been full of woe? Then Tuesday's child would be a traveller. The rhyme dictates the image, it reverses the calendar. Rhymes produce powerful spells.

What is WORD?

A group of sounds

A communication tool

The building-blocks of thought

When a word is spoken, when it is written, it is there, present, and we must deal with it. WORD is sacred to a poet, he cannot throw words around. Every word he uses must have its place, must have a location built for it; changing one word changes the poem, makes it another poem; words must be chosen very carefully. Suppose a poem were to include the words, "There is nothing"—an intriguing problem is announced here. What is "nothing"? Does the "nothing" obliterate the other words of the poem? Would the inclusion of "nothing" dictate a blank page? A poet must choose words carefully, his life depends upon the words he chooses.

A poet cannot say, "We are destroying this man's life, so that the rest of the community can live in peace"; rather, he must say, "We are killing a man."

"This is what the Lord God showed me: there was a basket of summer fruit, and he said, 'What are you looking at, Amos?' I answered, 'A basket of ripe summer fruit.'"[10]

[10] *(Amos 1:1-2) When Paul Ramsey came to the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (then, the University of Chattanooga) as poet-in-residence, one of his first assignments was a lecture. He used this image, this illustration of the prophet, Amos. I have borrowed it from him.*

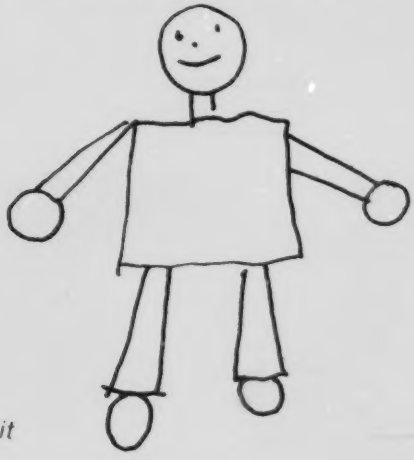
The prophet said what he saw. This is the poet's task. And in the text, I think the Lord's response is a completing process—there is a play on words—

Amos: "A basket of ripe summer fruit."

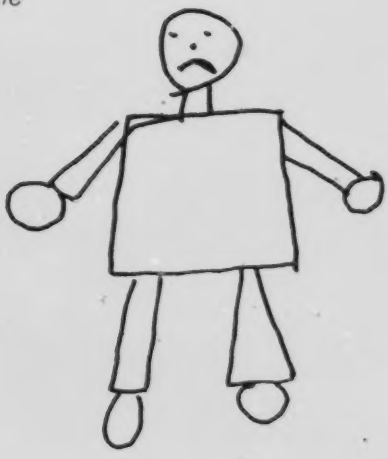
Lord God. "The time is ripe. . . ."

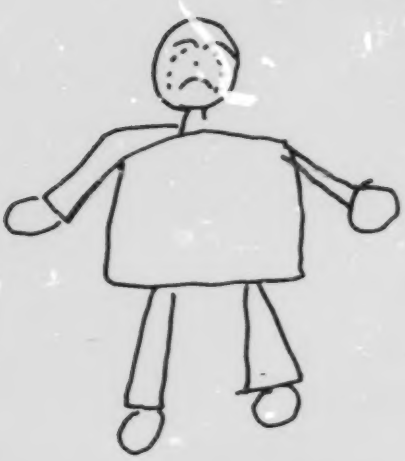
Sticks and stones
May break my bones,
But words will never hurt me.

Robert, age eight, wrote and drew this:



I Fell dem
I Fell Stoopit
I Feel uglie





When I asked him, he responded.

"I'm dumb about doing my work.
Coloring makes me feel like I'm stupid.
When I'm in my pajamas, I feel ugly."

dumb
stupid
ugly

Ronda Kay wrote, "am dome". With some encouragement, she wrote the following. Note the engaging nature of her form:

I've got 10 dogs
No! More than that—
I've got 13. and I
rise 6 dogs and 5 of
them died.
and I got 4 cats
No! More than that—
I got 10 and 1 of them
died out of that bunch
and I didn't like that.
but my Daddy did.

Robert who wrote,

I am The dums
in the wourld.

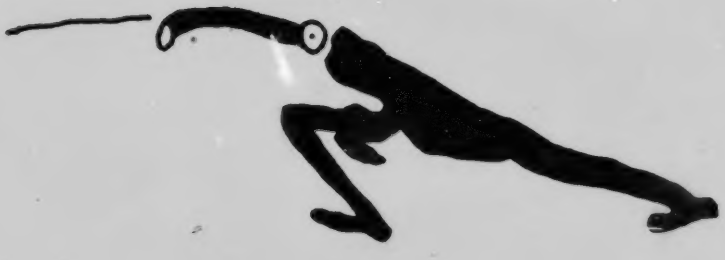
did not write anything else.

Franz Kafka realized the power of the word in his work.[11] In the last sentences of *The Trial*,[12] one is made aware of word knives. The knife is inserted, it is twisted, "like a dog" lives in the air, hovering above the turning blade:

"But the hands of one of the partners were already at K.'s throat, while the other thrust the

[11] *See Metamorphosis;* In The Penal Colony.
[12] *Franz Kafka.* The Trial. *Translated by Willa and Edwin Muir. Schocken Books.*

knife deep into his heart and turned it there twice. With failing eyes K. could still see the two of them immediately before him, cheek leaning against cheek, watching the final act. 'Like a dog!' he said; it was as if the shame of it must outlive him."



from a drawing by Franz Kafka

Words are powerful instruments. We build and destroy with words.

THOUGHT

In the history of tools we find this development:
1. A form from nature is taken over outright. A forked stick is appropriated as a plow.
2. The natural form is strengthened. Another stick or

sticks are tied onto the forked stick to make it easier to handle—to shift the work more and more to the tool.
3. The natural form is copied in other materials. An iron plow is stronger than the wooden stick.
4. The tool becomes more and more complicated. As the tool becomes heavier more and more decoration is added and often the sources of power are amended.
5. The tool becomes so cumbersome with its decorations and additions, it is rethought and simplified. Stripped to essentials, it is sometimes simpler than the original form.

Reason, alone, in a voice is no compensation for the voice.

In the history of thought we find this development:
1. Observation of natural phenomena.
2. The struggle between cosmos and chaos is perceived.
3. Moral questions are attached to the natural order.
4. Man attempts to explain everything in terms of everything.
5. The explanations are explained—ideas become weighted down with excess baggage.
6. Man takes up myth again—relativity, recurrence, rebellion. (2. and 3. can be labeled—development of myth; and 4. and 5.—science)

A reasonable argument can be without meaning to those outside the argument—the argument of itself can be a reasoned one in terms of reason. Children have a new sense of reason. Their arguments do not nessarily follow our sense of the reasonable, since they have within them

a new sense of reason and at the same time their senses of reason (as each of us has a personal sense of the reasonable—that which is reasonable to us) have not become so acculturated as ours.

A child may have all the sounds of the language on the tip of his tongue and still be speechless when he is asked to read. Our language does not work with single sounds. Hence the stupidity of teaching one sound at a time. The language works, is built with groups of sounds. These sound groupings are found in words. But the knowing of words is not enough. Hence the stupidity of learning one word at a time. One does not learn a language through vocabulary, but through strings of sounds, of words put together into expressions. These expressions, these groups of words express thought. They are the vehicle for thought. A child may know red (the word, red), but red means to him, red ball. The idea of the color red is something different. We begin sophisticated thought processes once we have worded-conceptions on which to hang our experiences.

Consider this complicated sentence by a six year old:

> *you will end up were you think you would not think you wouldn't*

The child wrote "were" for "where", but this convoluted process of reason is a very sophisticated one. The sen-

tence is alive. It causes us to stop and think. And thinking is a very dangerous activity today. Everything is streamlined. The "good sentence is the sentence that can be read at top speed."[1] Speed is the substance of our culture. We are a nation of motor inns and interstates. In the classroom, speed is the key to success. The child who does his work quickly, finishing ahead of all the other children, is considered more intelligent (often he is considered for double promotions). The child who reads fastest is the best reader. The slow worker, the careful worker is often not given the chance to finish. The hyperactive child is not a maladjusted child, but a child who has learned his lessons well and is aping the adult world as best he can.

Suppose the sentence, *"you will end up were you think you would not think you wouldn't,"* were able to survive in the child's brain up into fourth or fifth grade, what would the English teacher do with it? The most elaborate or the simplest denotes the highest degree of thought. We begin simply, we elaborate and expand, we elaborate the expansions, we simplify.

But the speed of the students in the classroom cannot equal the teacher's speed and the truce be kept between

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[1] *I have noted this stupid notion on several occasions—Those who speak quickly, gliding over words are intelligent. Those who speak slowly, elaborating the vowel sounds are dumb.*

teacher and student. If the child is too adept at grasping new tidbits of information, or is ahead and has already dispensed with his lesson before the teacher has presented it, the child is in for trouble. I have often heard first grade teachers complain about children who enter their first year of school already knowing how to read, write, use scissors, add or whatever. The classroom is so organized—every child is to learn the same thing at the same time as every other child. If he already knows it, then he sits through it quietly. If he doesn't learn it when it is presented, then too bad—he missed his chance. Ideas, constructions, words are presented in chapters and then forgotten. We study prepositions on Tuesday and prepositions are never mentioned again until test time.

For the quick child, the bored child, any child, movement is an essential. Words, thought, movement are parts of the human which cannot be overlooked.

Thought is influenced by the child's learning style. We learn in different ways—some of us can read directions for putting together a Christmas toy, or for sewing a dress and without consulting the directions again and again put the object together. On the other hand, some of us have to see someone do what we want to attempt before we can accomplish it. And there are many of us who have to do the thing in order to learn. We have to go through the motions in order to be able to perform the

task. There are different styles of learning. Almost a different style for every individual in the classroom, for we each have dominant modalities—I may hear more distinctly than you and am able to process what I hear more efficiently; you may be able to see better than I, but your auditory memory is not so good, so if you see what you are learning you are able to master it, whereas, I might be handicapped in front of a written page, but I can understand the material from an oral presentation and on and on.

However each of us accomplishes the task, we are thinkers—information comes in (and according to the depth of thought), we, then, check it with what we know, reform it and send it out again to another receiver so that he can do the same—validating or refuting what we have given out.

MOVEMENT

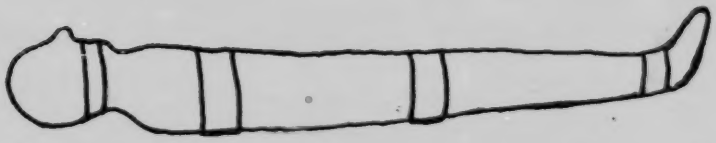
Action, though, is the important ingredient in a child's language. We talk with our bodies. Our capacities for thought and language depend upon our movements and the freedom of movement allowed us.

The actors of the National Theatre for the Deaf (a part of the Eugene O'Neil Memorial Theatre Foundation) depend upon action for their theatre. They, in turn, (the members of the cast are themselves, to some degree, deaf or mute, or both) observe carefully screen actors—expressing a preference for such an actor as Spencer

Tracy because of his eye movement, the expressive quality of his eyes. A friend gives me a birthday present, he watches my face to see my reaction. We talk with our faces. Our movements are a language themselves and are an integral part of our thought and of our spoken language.

At first we squirm when our body tells us to squirm. We are squirmers because we need to squirm. We soon learn that in some situations the need to squirm is more apparent than in others and if we notice that we squirm in a certain situation each time we encounter it, or each time we approach an approximate situation—we learn to squirm whether our body says to squirm or not (just as a child learns to like certain foods and he eats them whether his body has asked for them or not). We must have the stimulation of movement.

Imagine for a moment how difficult it would be for you to speak if you could not move. Movement is necessary—movement of air, of lungs, heart, vocal chords, chest muscles, throat, tongue, jaw, facial muscles, eyes, eye brows, hands, arms, feet. The child who is inhibited from moving cannot speak properly, much less read or write.



LANGUAGE

If we are capable of speech, we speak some oral language. This common tongue is based on the phonemics we have at birth, but just as no two finger prints are identical, no two speakers of the same language speak the exact language of the other since our organization patterns, our selection of vocabulary, our pitch, our breath pauses, our inflections, our geographic locations are not the same. Let us consider for a moment a few aspects of our spoken language.

Private Language

How stupid!
That was a crazy thing to do!
Never again!
Believe me. Of all . . .

. . . now, if this were over here?
What about here? No.
There . . . Well, possibly.
But I don't think . . .

Look at that!
Look at that!
Did you see that!
Why of all!
Beats me!
Idiot!

Have you ever watched people driving in cars? If I could read lips, I know I would learn some new four-letter

vocabulary for screaming at the world behind safety-plate glass. Or, have you eavesdropped on someone trying to arrange furniture in a room? Or, listened to someone talking to his television?

We carry on conversations with ourselves. Monologues spoken to the air. We think aloud. (I'm not certain this is apt, for our spoken private talk is one of emotional epithets, warnings to ourselves.)

Well, isn't it a pretty baby.
Oh, so cuddly this morning.
Where's mama? Oh, aren't you a pretty thing.
Now, now, don't get up there!
A cat's place is on the floor.

People talk to animals. When I was in Nashville, I fed the squirrels on the Vanderbilt campus. They liked M and M Chocolate Candies—the ones that "melt in your mouth and not in your hands". I learned to call the squirrels; with my mouth I made a clicking sound and the squirrels came. Recently, I was on Lookout Mountain and a squirrel came near the tree where I was—I tried the same clicking sound, but the animal ran away into the woods. Such animal conversations become embarrassing only when they are observed, for we tend to change our vocabularies, our voice quality, and our manner.

There is the private language of dreams:

A wild black stallion, I'd like to catch.
They are pretty, and fast, and hard to catch.
They've got velvet black coats

And shiny black tails. I'd like to
have my very own.

—Sarah Oppe, age nine

When I was born I wished I was a monkey.

—Joy, age six

I wish
wish
wishwell
wish well
wish thoughtfully

—Vernon Adams, age seventeen

There is the private language of children at play. Children make up codes to use over the telephone. They pretend to be speaking a foreign language as they walk down the street. They speak to imaginary playmates.

A language too private blocks our conversations with the world around us. Often, we invent a kind of semi-private vocabulary peopling it with strange images in order to protect ourselves from the world. Most people hear at some point in their childhood, "If you talk to yourself, you'll go crazy", or, "People who talk to themselves are crazy." Not so! But like everything else which is human, carried to extremes—yes. We all speak several private languages.

Public Language

Moving between the private languages and the public

language is dialect. We mimic those around us, so that a person from Mississippi living in Brooklyn will return home to Mississippi with a different accent, a language said differently from those around the speaker in the South.

For me, public language is difficult. For instance, I heard and said "Juhn" for "John", "pin" for "pen". I am switching from local sounds and expressions to a more standard dialect and back. Our language is built from combinations of vowel and consonant sounds. The vowels are forever changing sound—the vowel sounds in Texas are not the vowel sounds in Washington. Of particular interest to me is the "er" substitutions and droppings; so that, "laughter" becomes "laughta", "pillow" becomes "piller".

But whether we have distinctive dialects or not, we switch from private to public and back again depending upon the degree of intimacy in the relationship. In one situation, "it looks as if it were going to rain", in another, "looks like rain".

The difficulty comes when a child's home language, one he has learned, is so private that it hinders his ability to switch to a public language when the situation asks for a recognizable pronunciation and set of images. Here is a boundary. And in order not to establish this as a "great wall" the teacher must accept the language of the child. A simple, "I didn't understand what you said, will you say it again?" is much more human than "What'd

you say, can't understand a word of it?" or, "Don't talk like that in here". Do we conclude, no one spoke as Shakespeare wrote; therefore, his writing is not worth our time? The child needs help in executing the turns between his private tongue and the public one; he does not need an eradication of his language.

Oh, how good the moon looks.

—Andy Morgan, age sixteen

But more of all of them together.
I love the glowing stars.

—Karen Roach, elementary

It is the quality of the language spoken that is of concern to us. The movement of emotion through the words. It is the honesty expressed. It is a difficult process for the teacher—this distance between a private language and a public language—but it is one which merits our concern. There are several methods for doing this, one is modeling. I enjoy the game involved:

Child: *This ain't no far.*
Teacher: *Oh, this isn't fair.*
Child: *Ain't no far.*
Teacher: *It isn't fair.*
Child: *Nope.*

Stevie, a five-year old kindergarten pupil, said to me.

My dog don't catch no fish.

He was dictating a poem to me. Suppose I had stopped him, where would the poem be? I'm not certain. But here in the context of this particular poem it is a sensible group of words.[4]

ME AND MY DOG

Me and my dog
Go fishing.

My dog don't catch no fish,
But he swims in the lake.

I just fish
with the fishing pole.

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[4] *If double negations are not sensible, then why do so many children use them? The child is first negating the action, then negating the object—two acceptable rules of grammar. Only later will he be able to apply the more refined rule of double negation.*

There are other more appropriate times to learn about double negations. For the teacher and the student, I think Mark Twain's rule is appropriate in most situations—you can break a rule if you know you are breaking a rule.

Animals look at people
With big stern eyes.
But people look at animals
With little tiny eyes.

II.

EARLY POEM MAKING

Feeling Into Words

Early Poem Making

If we were able to tap a child's imagination we would have few worries in the classroom. Capturing a child's imaginings on paper is a difficult and often perplexing task, but it need not be impossible.

SOME PHILOSOPHICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL NOTIONS

Acceptance

If a child does not feel accepted, if he does not feel competent with the language he uses, that child is doomed to a life of slow-learner classes. (There are "slow learners", but catching on quickly to a new idea, to a new situation does not tell us that much about a child's intelligence.) One's ability to "catch on", to express himself, to read, to write, to function in the classroom is much more dependent upon the child's emotional health than upon the child's intelligence. Nothing is more important for a child, for any of us, than: *You Are Acceptable*. Now, I may not like what you are doing or some particular mannerism, but basically, I accept you. For the adult, who has difficulty accepting himself, the acceptance of another can pose perplexing problems.

Today, we find many people "finding themselves". Often forgotten is the gregarious nature of the beast—we are who we are in relation. Our relatedness gives us our individualness. We are individuals to the extent that we

are related. We cannot "find ourselves" apart from one another. Each of us has a history, a past. And it is our understanding of this past, our acceptance of the past, that makes the present possible. All of us have a past; few have a present—since the past is dismissed, alien, alienating us from ourselves, from the present. With no present there is no person.

It is defining the process of the past, this search which propels and hinders—the essential process is one of juxtaposition, positioning ourselves against the backdrop. I am not that; therefore, I am this. I am not this; therefore, I am that. For those of us who persist in "finding ourselves" the search is never completed in isolation.

The teacher in the classroom cannot eradicate a child's past, cannot change that past history. The teacher is presented with the child in the present. It is the teacher's job to help the child with his past—labeling it, establishing it, interpreting it—in order to confirm the present. The teacher says to the child, *"You are you. I am I. We are we"*.

What does acceptance entail? Does one ooh-and-ah over the child, saying, "I accept you, oh, I accept you"? If no, then, in what ways do we establish the child in the present?

Acceptance of His Language

The most-readily available means of acceptance on the teacher's part is the acceptance of the child's language, gently persuading him toward standard grammar, but allowing for the back and forth movement from one to the other. The teacher can model a lively language. Teaching the child how to hear—a child may say and hear "jopping" for "chopping".

Acceptance of His Imagination

Children imagine all sorts of things—

> *Pigs eat hamburgers and hotdogs and french-fries. They put salt and pepper on their tomatoes.*

This information from a group of five-year olds presents the play of the language and mind of a child—the substitution for "me". The child who has difficulty talking about himself could be engaged in a conversation about animals—it is surprising to see how the animals have the human characteristics of the child's world:

> *Pigs eat hamburgers and hotdogs and french-fries. They put salt and pepper on their tomatoes. Hot pepper and hot pickles burn their mouths. They spit it out and go get two drinks of water. Pigs run and eat. They eat onions and potato chips. At night they go to bed. Pigs*

dream about food. Pigs dream about their mamas and daddys and sisters and brothers. Pigs play with toy ducks and real ducks. Real birds eat and fly.

—Kim C., Eva, Lisa, Stephanie, Penny, Kim, David, Dewayne

Acceptance of His Fears and Joys

I was pretty mad. I was pretty mad when I didn't get to play with my friends.

—Zeb, age six

I don't feel so hot. When my Daddy whips me at home I don't feel so hot.

—Lesley, age six

I'd be king. Kings boss everybody around. I boss people around sometimes. It makes me feel real good.

—Craig, age six

All the emotional trauma experienced by the adult world can be found concentrated in the lives of children. If children are to be able to share with you these, then, you, as the adult in the classroom, cannot say to the children (directly or through inference), "No one should feel like that". If no one should feel this way, then, why does the child, do we as humans feel in these ways? Putting feelings outside us, talking about them, writing them down, making poems out of them allows a kind of expurgation on the one hand and a cultivation on the other—whichever is important for the individual involved.

Hate, love, fear, joy are basics in our existence. They propel or stop us. If we are to "preserve" them, if we opt to be full rather than half people, we have to admit our feelings, express them and work them out in community.

The child who screams, "I hate you!", is he to be given a slap across the face? Defining what is hateable is an important part of growth, of living. There is no love without hate—no real living without opposition. The full child is the child in juxtaposition, one who has not had his feelings turned in upon himself.[1]

A survey of the classroom is an excellent tool for discovering feelings. In a first grade class, I interviewed each child. The children were in various groups of activity—some were doing a manuscript lesson, others were in a reading group, others were coloring—so that the interview was conducted without loss of working control in the classroom and without upset to the schedule of activities. I simply asked each child, "How do you feel?" Then, we discussed these feelings. I wrote down the children's responses, typed them up, and returned all of them on a mimeo sheet entitled, *Our Feeling Reader*, leaving space on the paper for their drawings.

[1] *See: Carson McCullers,* The Ballad of the Sad Cafe; *Elizabeth Bowen,* The Death of the Heart; *Theodore Roethke,* Poem To My Sister. *Or any psychological case history of inhibited feelings.*

OUR FEELING READER
(From Mrs. Morris' First Grade Class,
Signal Mountain Elementary School)[2]

David S.: *I feel fine as new. I like to jump in leaves. I would play in the leaves, play dead man. It would feel awful to be dead. "Dead man, dead man, come alive," and then you try to catch them. If you catch them they have to be the dead man.*

Karen: *I was a mouse in the play. I felt funny like a mouse eating flour. I would hide in a hole if I was a mouse. I would play Chase. I would chase a friend. If I caught my friend he would chase me.*

Jamie: *When I have a lot to do I feel fine. Work, brick masonry, building race cars are fun as riding bicycles and racing. I have a little track where I race. The bike is hard to handle. My stomach grows when I go down a hill.*

Joy: *Awful! Makes me want to go to bed. In bed, I would play with monkeys. They go to sleep. They dream of other monkeys playing in trees. If I was a monkey I would play in trees, play hopscotch and jumprope. When I was born I wished I was born a monkey.*

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[2] *In this same class the children and I wrote a group poem. I received pictures and stories from each of them.*

51

David B.: *If I were crazy I would go and hide. I wouldn't want anyone to hear me. I would talk to myself.*

Cindy: *I feel funny. I feel funny when my Daddy steps on a jack. I feel funny when somebody tickles me. When I was in the play I felt funny. I felt like a big balloon because I had on two things, a maxie and an apron. I don't know how I feel right now. I would like to feel like a doll.*

Staci: *When I get real mad at my sister I hit her with my shoe. I hit my Daddy when I get mad at him—when he turns me upsidedown by the legs.*

Zeb: *I was pretty mad. I was pretty mad when I didn't get to play with my friends. I'm mad when somebody hits me in the knuckles.*

Craig: *I'd be king. Kings boss everybody around. I boss people around sometimes. It makes me feel real good.*

Lesley: *I don't feel so hot. When my Daddy whips me at home I don't feel so hot. When I get hit with rotten eggs I don't feel so hot. When the sun's real hot I go barefooted.*

Robin: *I feel like a cat climbing a tree. He's trying to catch a bird. If I caught a bird I'd put it in a cage. The bird would feel funny because he wasn't outside. When I'm outside I play. I play with my sister. We play Chase and sometimes Freeze Tag. I feel like I'm sleepy. I want to try to stay awake.*

David W.: *I would like to be riding a motorcycle on the road to Disneyland. I would make my money by making something like an egg, a gold egg. I could sell the egg for two dollars. I would sell it to Cori. She would keep it.*

Billy: *I would like to be playing cowboys. Cowboys kill people. It wouldn't feel good to be killed. I wouldn't like to be killed. But I wouldn't kill nobody, just shoot animals except horses,*

I wouldn't shoot them. I wouldn't shoot nothing like a horse. I would ride a horse to home. I would keep it on the Point. I'd give it water and feed everyday.

Michael: *When I fell from the barn I felt like I was going to break my arm. I felt terrible, like nobody was going to help me. I thought my brother would step on my hands.*

Scott: *I went fossil hunting and boy, was it hot. I hunted for fossils. A fossil feels like rock. I found so many. I keep fossils and army men in my room. They can shoot the enemy. They hide behind the fossils. How do you think a shell would feel?*

Cori: *I feel good when I go outside and play. I play hopscotch—you jump when you play. I go look at flowers that's blooming in our yard. It makes me feel good as a flower blooming outside in the grass. I would say 'Hello' to a robin.*

Johnny: *We found a dead fox. It would feel bad to get shot. It would feel sort of dizzy and real, real pain as much pain as you ever have. I have pain a few times at school, sometimes my head gets real pain.*

Stacy: *It feels sort-a good to get a message. If I got a message I would want to hear good things—like telling people that it's always spring, saying it's almost Easter. I want to hear something happy like seeing a play or seeing a person.*

Doyle: *I would like to be fishing 'cause it's spring. It feels fun as playing hide-and-go-seek. It feels as good as playing Chase. I would like to be a bird. I would fly in the sky to a tree. I would build a nest and lay.*

Terry: *I don't know how I feel. I don't know how I feel at home—just sitting around and watching TV. At school, we go out at recess and we have to work math problems sometimes. It makes me feel like I'm just doing work. When I go swimming it feels good, it feels cool and sometimes I go under water like a shark. A shark feels like he's hungry.*

A POEM REQUIRES TALK

For any child, reading and talking are essentials. Read to them at every chance. Let them see you reading novels, essays, poems, newspapers, whatever you like to read. If you have a rest period after lunch when the room is quiet—spend your time reading something for yourself. We learn by observing and by doing.

Read to the children aloud—at least three or four times each day. Read short poems, short books. Make reading a pleasure. Cultivate the art of storytelling. Memorize poems and recite them to your class. Children are amazed to find you reeling off something like *Kubla Khan*—they do not have to understand Coleridge in order to find the sounds produced in his poem exciting. One of my fondest memories of childhood is hearing my mother go about her work in the house reciting monologues from Shakespeare and Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il*

Penseroso. These recitations caused me to stop and hear, to listen to the English language. I was reminded of them again this summer when Mrs. Thelma Gray, a first grade teacher recounted to a workshop her early elocution lessons and then recited to the class "a reading". Her voice took on the character parts, her body moved—the entire room of adults sat at rapt attention. Can you imagine what this sort of thing means to a group of children?

Often the best story can turn into a contest of wills—will Johnny be still and quiet so that I can finish. (Just because you like a particular story, do not expect the children to find it interesting.) In most cases, if you practice the art of story telling, no matter what story you are reading, it will be exciting. One thing of importance to remember when conversing, when reading, when telling a story—the child sitting quietly, staring at you may be the child in the midst of a daydream whereas the child squirming about, looking out the window may be giving you his closest attention.

A poem requires talk. A poem asks for our ears and our voices. A poem asks us to experience with our emotions. The child's speech is close to poetry and often is a poem.

> *I went fossil hunting and boy, was it hot. I hunted for fossils. A fossil feels like rock. I found so many. I keep fossils and army men in my room. They can shoot the enemy. They hide*

behind the fossils. How do you think a shell would feel?

—Scott, age six

If we are to hear the children, we must listen to them. We must value their words.

Sit down with the child, on the floor, on his level and talk not with this in mind, "Now here is what I hope to produce", but simply talk with him:

What did you do over the weekend?

I went fossil hunting and boy, was it hot!

Where did you go?

I hunted for fossils.

Tell me about fossils—how does a fossil feel?

A fossil feels like rock. I found so many.

Where will you keep them?

I keep the fossils and army men in my room.

How do they communicate? Do you suppose they talk after you have gone to sleep?

They can shoot the enemy. They hide behind the fossils.

They shoot bullets?

How do you think a shell would feel?

Here is a beginning. The student takes on the role of the teacher, "How do you think a shell would feel?" He begins to question; to articulate his feelings. And with this last question from the child, an entrance for poetry is made. A shell—a fossil? a bullet? With *shell*, with *feel*, the child can begin to play with his language.

While the child talks, I write down his responses and my questions. We read them together (his responses) and the child decides which he wants to keep, and in what organization he will place them. Whatever response he makes is acceptable—I am saying to him, "I value your language. I value our talk. I value your feelings."

Let us analyze this conversation further:

The questioning is conversational; that is, if the child does not answer with further information after the same question is phrased differently, the question is switched, since the teacher in the situation is not "fishing" for particular answers. The questions are more open-ended. For, if to the question "Where did you go?", the child had answered, "I went to a cave", the questioning would follow the child. Neither is in a controlling position—the

child responds to the questions, but the questions follow the responses. It would be appropriate after some time to shape this conversation into a poem of sorts.

I hunted for fossils.
I found so many.
A fossil feels like rock.
How do you think a shell would feel?

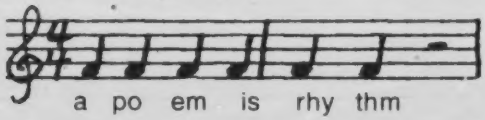
Ask the child to read what you have written (the conversation), return the conversation to him in typed-paragraph form; ask him to study it and to decide what the most important lines are for him. Return the conversation to him in line form; ask him to choose the most important lines. Return these to him; call them a poem.

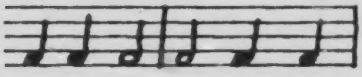
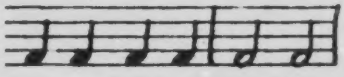
A POEM IS RHYTHM

The essential of any poem is some rhythmically vital language. A poem does not need formal meter or rhyme to be a poem (though many children prefer to hear this strongly rhymed verse). A rule of thumb for the early years—strong-rhythmed pieces with some rhyme: to be read and said; freer forms when the child is composing his own poem. Until one is a fairly sophisticated user of the language, rhyme tends to appropriate all the child's energy—he forgets his feelings and ideas in order to rhyme the next line.

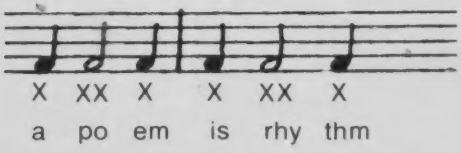
The child's speech patterns are rhythmical. In order to

point this out to him more clearly, try this: Speak slowly pronouncing each syllable distinctly, giving each syllable the same stress; so that, if you were tapping your foot every syllable, no matter how long or short in normal speech, would get the same stress and time duration.



After this demonstration, ask a child to say something to you, or select a particular observation made by a child after listening to your new way of speaking; such as, "That sure sounded funny". Ask five or six children to say this, one at a time. Now, ask if there are other ways to say this line. Point out the rhythm of our language—we all say the line, "That sure sounded funny", with approximately the same stress on the same syllables. Have the children say lines, trying to slow down in the middle or at the end.



You might substitute claps for the words. 'X' is a clap.



Try this with any poem the class knows.

In the child's speech there are rhythmic patterns. In a conversation between David, a child of five, and myself, we discussed snakes. I wrote down his first line:

I saw four snakes in my whole life.

Tell me about the first one.

One was a copper head dead out in the road.

Here, a list was beginning, so I asked, "and the second one?". His reply,

Two was out at Northgate Mall.

Such a list consists of repetition and repetition establishes form, establishes rhythm. We came up with this:

I saw four snakes in my whole life—
One was a copperhead dead out in the road.
Two was out at Northgate Mall.
Number Three was a black racer chasing my Grandmother.
Four was a garter snake in the back of my yard.
Five was another garter snake in Nancy's back yard.

For David Lambert and myself this is a poem. It is his language. Now, as the teacher, I pointed out to David

some of the things he had done: You made a list. You repeated certain words, certain patterns. You varied your pattern in line four; this makes your list more interesting to hear—you surprised us. After our initial writing, we could have gone back to this list and described feelings concerned with the various snakes mentioned.

Whether the child is a reader of the printed word or not, the child benefits from seeing his words written on the page. My reported this exclamation from an irate mother, "Now don't you let Jane fool you—she's not reading! She memorizes the book." That's a strange "put-down". Many children learn to read in such a way. This mother gives no recognition to how powerful a tool memory is. Children memorize stories read to them. If you have ever read a story several times to a small child, haven't you noticed how the child (if this is a favorite story or book) can say to you, "You skipped that page", or, "You did not read all of this page"?

We are all readers from birth. We survey our environment. We read it. Simply because a child isn't reading from a primer is no reason to say he is not reading or to feel handicapped when it comes to writing and poetry. You can write down his words and show them to him. You can have some other child in the room read them, or you can read them yourself.

Here is a list I recorded after asking a group of eight five-year olds this question, "If you could be an animal, what would you be?" The elements of poetry are found

in the language of every child, and it is from this natural form—the list—that a poem can be built.

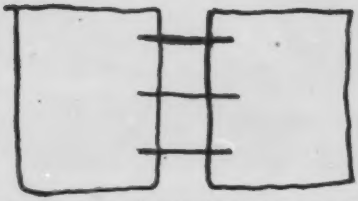
If I could be an animal I'd be
A big giant cat,
A mean alligator,
A terrible snake and real long,
A wild dog,
A good elephant,
A strange horse,
A yellow bird,
Just a dog.

To make the list more interesting we went back and thought of some adjectives; so that, instead of cat, alligator, snake; we got big giant cat, mean alligator, terrible snake.

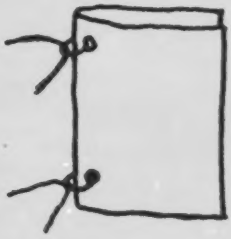
Such a list lends itself to the making of a book.

Steps in the making of a book

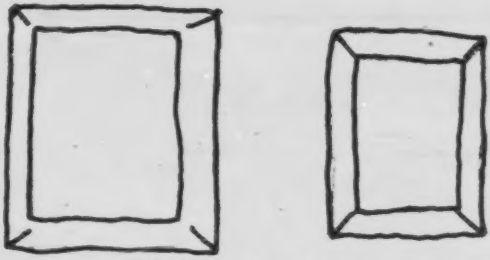
1. Materials needed: paste board or card board or poster board, glue, tape, staples, yarn or string, construction paper. Binding can be as simple or as complicated as you want to make it. Use whatever materials you have at hand. The back boards and spine of the book can be covered with contact paper or wall paper or fabric. If all the children in your room are included, you might end up your school year with a library of children's books—books written, edited, bound by children.



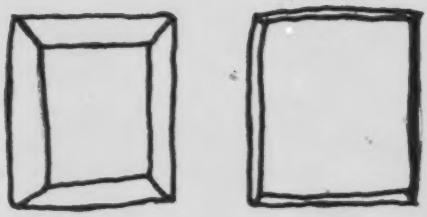
2. Place the backs about two inches apart and measure string, making certain the string is the proper length.



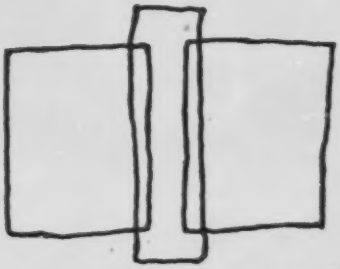
3. Punch two or three holes through the pages of the manuscript and tie the string in each hole leaving equal amounts on either side of the knot.



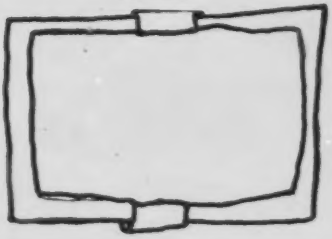
4. Place your material, paper, or whatever you have decided to use to cover the cardboard, under each board and cut out around the board leaving enough material to wrap the edges of the board. Paste the material to the board and press.

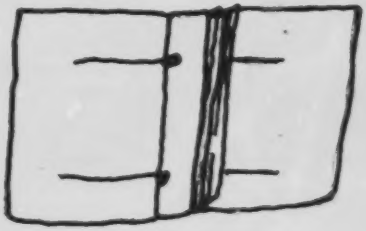


5. To cover the insides of the boards use a piece of colored paper and paste in place over the edges of the material.

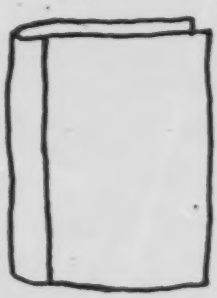


6. The boards are ready to be joined with a wide strip of any suitable tape (book binding tape is best). Press the tape to the outside of the boards leaving about an inch





7. between the boards for the manuscript. Bring the edges of the tape over each end and press to inside of cover. Place the manuscript to this tape spine and press. Attach the strings to either side with additional strips of tape. You have a bound volume.



A LANGUAGE COMES ALIVE IN DRAMA

With abundant talk and encouragement Marcia, David S., Kim, Earl, Shelly, Eva, David L., Penny, Kent, Allica, Dewayne and Tina composed a play. This group of five-year olds had no trouble coming up with ideas for the play. They were not sure what a play was, but they wanted to try one.

In such an undertaking, I found it necessary to follow the children rather than to ask them to do this or that. A child would come up with a line and then with questioning on my part other lines would follow from other children. In this particular kindergarten class we had talked a great deal about animals. Here is the short play. It is not an accomplished piece, but an example of a first effort with no revision after performance.[3] I typed the play and mimeographed it for the teacher with these suggestions: If you are able to involve older students in your classroom, have them practice the play with their teacher and with you. Let your students make the masks and the scenery. Ask the older students to come into your classroom and give the play with you acting as the moderator. When they have finished, ask your students to complete the action, suggesting lines to the older students. Bring all the characters onto the stage (the rug) and let them discuss with your students what is going to happen, what has taken place, and "What would you do or say?".

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[3] *Mrs. Brown's Kindergarten Class, Spring Creek School.*

THE ANIMALS

Characters: Boy 1, Snake, Monster, Boy 2, Lion and Tiger, Monkey, Gorilla, Girl, Mama Snake.

Setting: The Woods.

Scene One: Two Boys are walking through the woods.

Boy 1: I'll climb a tree and stay away from all the animals.

Boy 2: I'll run away back home.

Snake: (coming out of the weeds) I'll bite you! S-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s! Snakes can climb trees.

Boy 1: Get away from me! I'll climb another tree. (The Snake crawls away, but a monster jumps out from behind a tree).

Monster: I'll get you. I'm gonna get you!

Boy 1: I will throw a knife at you. If I were a witch I'd light up a big fire, get some on a stick and point it at you. (The monster runs away.)

Boy 2: If I had an electric airplane, I could get away. I'll fly in a helicopter if I see a lion or a big tiger. (A lion and a big tiger stick their heads out of the tall swamp grass.)

The Lion: Gr-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!

The Tiger: Gr-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!

The Monkey: (running by) O-o-o-o-o-o-oh!

Scene Two: The Boys meet a gorilla.

The Gorilla: I'll peel you like a banana. Oooo-o-o-o-o-ooooo!

Boy 2: I have a scary mask and I'll scare you!

Boy 1: I'll put on a devil mask like my brother's. (The Gorilla runs away after Boy 1 pulls out the mask and puts it on.)

Scene Three: A girl joins the boys.

Girl: Get off that mask and go with me hunting things!

Boy 2: Yeah! I'll go one way.

Boy 1: I'll go another way. You, two, go together.

Girl: I'll go by myself.

Scene Four: The Girl meets a snake and its mother.

Snake: I'll bite you.

Girl: I'll go get a gun and really shoot you!

Snake: I'll run home. I'll tell the other animals to run home.

Girl: You can't stop me from killing you.

Snake: I'll run away and tell my Mama Snake to come eat you. (The Snake runs away and as the Girl starts to leave:)
Mama Snake: S-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s!

Girl: S-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s!! (They stare at one another.) Please can I be your friend?

Mama Snake: S-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s

Girl: (Class completes the drama)

A CHILD'S POETRY IS A CHILD'S LANGUAGE

It behooves a teacher of young children to take dictation whenever possible, to use this material in the teaching of reading and in the honoring of the child's language.

Here are a few samples of children's language. I wrote them while sitting in a classroom of five-year olds. Notice how exciting and fresh-sounding the language is.

> *Me and my brother Mike went out in the woods and saw the same snapping turtle. When Mike was at school, me and Mama found a yellow one in the yard . . . two pairs were travelling.*

Dad pulled a whole spine out of the trout fish's bone. That was its back bone.

Tigers, elephants, snakes, alligators, frogs and roosters—they get in their thing, their barn, their cage when it's snowing.

Beast—an animal, a biganee.

He drinks milk. He likes cornbread. I didn't name it yet. The teddybear is blue with a red face. You know where I got it? At the fair. I won the teddybear and a fish, but it died. Them other people put green water in there and it died. The teddybears go out and play in the yard. They ride bicycles—up and down the pasture. They go to the barn. Horses live in the barn—a whole bunch of horses. I had some but we gave them away.

Cows run in the woods. Black cows run when you get close to them. They eat grass.

With repetition, some questioning on the teacher's part concerning the child's feelings, and the exciting language of the child—a poem is made.

In another kindergarten class, I conducted picture interviews with all the children in the classroom.

I took paper, markers (large ones and small ones—we all write with different instruments, I allowed the children to select their own), and three questions.

My first direction was: Draw a picture of yourself. Yourself right now, just as you are.

Then, I asked three questions and recorded the responses.

1. Tell me about your picture.

   That's his pants. That's his shirt. His two eyes and his mouth. His hands. His feet.

2. What are you doing?

   I'm running, trying to catch somebody. We're playing Chase.

3. How do you feel?

   I feel happy.

Ed, age six, was asked to come back the next day. Today, he took the larger marker so the next day, I asked him to draw with the smaller marker to see what differences this would make with Ed. He was very comfortable with the smaller one and his picture of himself was stable. We decided to talk some more and to "tell me a poem about your picture—what are you doing?".

MY BICYCLE

Riding bikes
Feels like riding trains.
Long, long time ago
I was setting down
And it went through some woods
(the train). I looked around.
I saw some wooden Indians,
a house that had cowboys outside
and then we went back.

The wind is just like cold.
It makes me feel good—
Just like the moon.

The dialogue between Ed and myself turned into his poem. I have not altered any of his words or edited the words in any way other than arranging them in lines as

he spoke them to me. This line arrangement made sense at the time he said them.

Here are other poems written in the same manner.[4] I think this kind of poem writing is very exciting—a kind of bonding between teacher and student, between adult and child.

THE LAUGHING GIRL

She's laughing
She said, "It's funny.
It's a good day."

The wind blew her hair
And she laughed.

—Rhonda, age six

[4] *Each child was asked to title his poem and to read it with me. Some children may want to memorize their words.*

AT THE LAKE

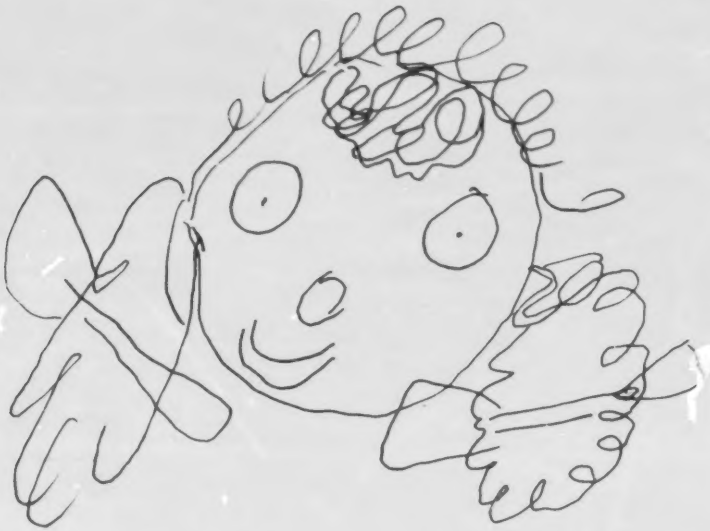
Ride rides!
Swing high!

Go up high!
Go down fast!

I splash in the blue water.
I see fishes swimming.
I see waves making noise.

Swim in the bottom of it
And look for gold.

—Floyd, age six



ME AND SANDY AND LAMAR

Sandy comes over
When Amy's not there.
She brings Lamar over.
He's Sandy's brother.

Me and Sandy play.
We are the robbers.

Lamar shouted, "Hey!
What'd you do that for?"

Me and Sandy play jump rope.

Sandy leaves me
And I go in to eat supper.
I feel a little bit sad.

—Kim, age six

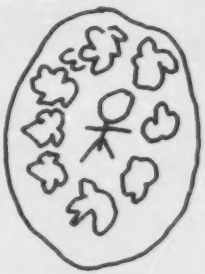
THE TEACHER MUST BE OPEN TO THE POSSIBLE

Bill, age five, brought an assortment of dough models he had made and his mother had baked. I asked him to tell me about each of the items. He asked to draw them. One, he called "man in flowers". I asked him to tell me a poem about this particular one. He agreed.

THE MAN IN FLOWERS

The man in flowers
is sitting down.

He's thinking of spiders.
They got legs,
lots of legs.



And on their stomachs
they make their nests.

The man in flowers
is thinking he's in the army.

He thinks he's gonna get shot
in the head.

The man in flowers
is gonna get up and go home.

From the stimulus of the child's own dough figure, he fashioned a poem of simple profundity.[5]

A POEM IS A TOWN MEETING

Group Poems were substituted when there was not enough time to have individual conferences with each child. The Group Poem turns out to be a kind of town meeting requiring thought and participation. It focuses again on the children's language.

The teacher's job is to mold the various ideas offered into a poem through several steps: group discussion, vote on topic for poem, lines suggested by the children are recorded on the board, class discussion on form and manner in which the lines will be incorporated into a poem.

FOG

Peeping through the covers at the fog
While the smoke flies through the air—
It goes out the doors, in the cracks
And through the moving elevators
Outside, where the sun burns it up.
The wind moves very slowly.
It is water, it is air, it is fire,

[5] *I have read Bill's poem at several of my poetry readings. It moves each audience. It is unexpected. Too often the adult world does not listen to the insides of the child.*

It is smoke. It's a ball of wind
Where the sun burns the sky.

This poem was composed on a rainy day by a group of thirty-three second graders. It is their poem. I acted as recorder of the lines and as moderator in the class discussion.

Playing with words, hearing them spoken aloud, seeing them written down and realizing that they themselves have made a poem creates an atmosphere of delight among the children within the classroom.

In his book, *Wishes, Lies and Dreams,* Kenneth Koch tells of his experiences with what he calls "Class Collaborations" where each child is asked to contribute one written line and then the collection of lines is read aloud as a poem. This is one possibility. In another, a classroom I visited, the teacher had the children to write poems for special holidays. She would ask one child to give her a line and then the child who could think of a line to rhyme with the first line would give her his line, etc. It is important for the teacher to take the method which works in her classroom.

I have found the Group Poem to be a very good beginning for almost any classroom in the elementary grades. Here are other examples:

A kindergarten group poem, written after they had lis-

tened to recordings of whales. I began, "Tell me about the whale—"

THE WHALE

The whale is bigger than this room,
About two thousand inches.
He eats little baby fish
When he is hungry. For lunch,
He eats fish and bread.
People throw the bread in.
He pops his little plug out
And water will come out.
He will find his way back home.
He lives down at the bottom
Of the sea in a cave.

The whale stays around
After supper because he is lazy—
He's just lazy. When he gets lazy
He goes home and takes a nap
And when he gets good
He goes out and plays.
(Are whales dangerous?)
I know the name of a whale.
He's white and black.
He's a killer whale.

In a second grade classroom, I read some children's poems from Richard Lewis' *Miracles* concerning weather. I had chosen these poems because of the foggy morning outside the classroom. The circus was also coming to town. We combined these ideas and the children spoke this poem:

THE CIRCUS IN THE FOG

Jump off a bed!
Jump on a lion!
Lions and tigers with fog on their noses,
Jump on the ceiling and walk upsidedown.
Ride a camel,
Ride on the high wire across the wall into the town.
Be a clown in the fog—
Use a flashlight!
Pull the clown clothes out the elephant's trunk.
Jump on the animals and ride around,
Be friendly with them
And love the tiger.

A group of first graders wrote about elephants:

TRUNK, TRUNK

The ones with tusks
Suck water up their pink, soft noses—
Elephants do. Do you?
They wash themselves with their grey noses.
They spray cold water with their trunks.
And in their dreams they walk in ponds.

Every group of children with whom I worked was fascinated with snakes. Here are some of their snake poems. The poems are made from questions and answers. I voiced the questions, I wrote the responses together as a poem. The only editing going on in these poems is the decisions of the children—which lines to use. If a child had volunteered a line and the rest of the class didn't like it, I would come back to the child asking him

to give us the line again for now I thought it was the time to use it, or I would ask him to give us another line. Sometimes I would combine two lines into one and write this line upon the board, then turn to the class and ask if this was the right idea, if this sounded better, or was it better to make it two lines. I usually ended up having to erase my editorializing.

Except for "The Dirty Worm", all the following snake poems are by second grade classes. "The Dirty Worm" was written by Tony, Mark, LeAnne, Mike, Keita, Kathy, Lisa, Donna—children from an elementary remedial reading group.

THE SNAKE THAT SINGS

S-s-s-s-s-s-s, the snake sings
With a humming sound.
He couldn't live under a boulder
In the water, under the ground.
Because the dirt would melt away,
The water would sink his hole in—
He wouldn't have a way to get out.

A SQUIRMY, NOISY, SNEAKY SNAKE

Geese, cats and snakes go S-s-s-s-s.
Herbie the Snake climbs trees—orange, apple and peach.
Goosey the Goose protects her eggs.
Mitten the Cat takes care of her babies.
And Herbie keeps his eggs warm.

Snakes, cats and geese swim in still, dangerous lakes.

COPPERHEAD

A Snake with orange, black and white
Sings in the morning, the evening and at night.
He sings s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s
In the morning, afternoon and in the dark night.

THE DIRTY WORM

The dirty worm digs holes,
Gets dirty, goes swimming,
Gets married and climbs on the grass.
The dirty worm gets stepped on.
He dies.

THE BEST WAY IS TO SAY AS MANY POEMS AS POSSIBLE

Choose some book of children's poems such as *Miracles*, or *Here I Am!* and read poems from these to the children in your classroom, read title and child's name and age—choose poems written by children whose ages approximate the ages of the children in your room. The next step: You are poets, too. Let's write. (Verbatim quotations from the poems the children have heard are cetainly acceptable.)

Choose some books of strongly rhythmed pieces such as *The Tall Book of Mother Goose* or Roethke's *I Am! Says the Lamb*, picking up on any interesting rhythms in the children's writings and the rhythms in the printed poems.

Basic rhythms are iambs and trochees:
x / and / x. These are the basic rhythms of the English language. Other common patterns are x x / and / x /. Any time a child is asked to write about his feelings, he will, in most instances, produce a part of himself, a substantial piece.

OTHER GROUP POEMS, POEMS WRITTEN BY FIRST AND SECOND GRADERS

ANIMAL DREAM

A purple square dachshund
With three eyes and a round tail
Was chasing some cars
The dog said, "ruf, wolf, er-er-erf,"
as he cased the blue and black Chrysler.
He jumped on a brown automobile.
He jumped on a motor cycle
And took off.

GOOD NIGHT DREAM

Open the door, go on out the door,
Walk in the snow, walk in the pasture,
Walk in the school. We will write
Sentences, McDonald's, scribbles
And "Go Home". We go to the bus stop,
We take a bath, brush our teeth,
Say our prayers and go to sleep.

THE LONG-LEGGED SPIDER

Creepy Crawly crawled away
To catch a fly eating lunch.
She layed an egg
With thousands of eggs and spiders inside.
"Lay down the drawbridge fly," said the spider.
He said, "OK" and flew away.
"Goodbye for a year," said the spider.

THE SPIDER IN A JAR

The spider writes his best friend's name—
His name is Spark.
He is covered with spots,
He glows in the dark,
He hunts for bugs or goes to sleep,
He dreams about his friends.

THE DEADLY SPIDER

Black widows are usually black,
Or about brown.
They are black
With a red spot on their back.
His back looks like a black ribbon,
Like a car tire.
At night he makes a web like a ball
With designs all over.

MYRTLE THE TURTLE

Myrtle stays out of the water.
She cleans house.
She cleans her shell
With her soapy pail.
She mops the floor
With her little tail.
Before she goes to bed—
She covers up her head.

She dreams of
a fish and a fly
a waterbug and a spider
And a big, old, black mosquito
Who says,
"Get to work
And clean up the house!"

THE BEAUTIFUL GREEN WORLD

We like to play in the yard,
The school, the playground.
We like to play school.
We like to play hopscotch
In the green grass where flowers live.

TABLES AND CHAIRS

When the lights are turned off
The tables and chairs dream
They are going away to the woods.
They go into the ground and find
Roots and worms, sand and dirt,
Snails and snakes, and ant holes.
The chop man chops them down
And takes them to the house
Where they make wood.

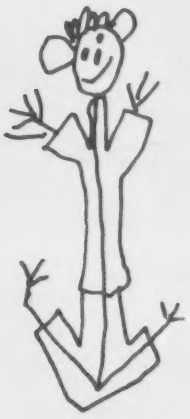
DAYS OFF

Dogs sleep all day.
Cats play all day.
Sometimes a day seems forever.
Puppies jump on company
The dog is new--he doesn't know.
Cats jump on other cats—cats fight inside.
Dogs and cats go on summer vacations to the lake.

PILLOW

White chicken feathers
Laying on the ground,
Turning different colors—
Gold, silver, gray and brown.

Leaves and feather look alike.
When they're stacked together
There's a whole bunch of them
And they're shaped like a leaf.



People and animals are alike
If you see them run
Through the night.

III.

DEVELOPING WRITERS

Stepping from Self to Others

Developing Writers

Sensitivity to the world around us is a quality of living which is often forced out of us as it is developing, or it is a quality never learned. Until he learns his grammar lessons (and often after the lessons are learned) a child says "ME" first! Me and you, me and my friend, me and my sister.

We have a difficult time stepping out of ourselves—witness this attempt:

I WROTE A POEM

1.
Once there was a cotton patch
And it was a good patch, too—
Only if it was still there.

2.
A cotton patch—little flowers!
We played hide-and-seek.
I hid behind a bunch of branches
With cotton on it.

3.
I love cotton so very much
And I wish I was it.

—Jay Webb, age nine

I is important. Most important. We tend to identify, to relish books written in the first person. The poem containing *I* becomes the reader. The *I* allows participation, invites the reader to become the *I* of the poem.

For a child to write, he must be given the freedom to write his feelings and to write them poorly, to misspell, to forget his grammar rules. It is easier to say to the child, "Now, today we are writing, using this formula, 'I am _____ because _____' ", but it is much more rewarding for the child and the teacher if a bit of frustration is introduced: "Today, we are writing about feelings. How do you feel?" Asking the child to come up with his own form, his own word and line arrangement; giving the child some responsibility. Otherwise, one ends up with thirty like-poems, a boring sameness. If the teacher is aware of the frustration toleration limits of the children in the room, he can give aid to those children who have a very difficult time with their writing—not with ideas, but with the skill of putting a word down. After asking, "How do you feel?" ask such questions as, "Have you ever felt this way before?" "If you are sad, how sad are you?" "If you are happy, how happy?" "Is there anyone or anything in the world which feels like you do?" "Let's write a poem. Tell me how you feel."

Suppose a child wrote:

I am tired.

Follow this line with, "How tired are you?" "What do you do when you are tired?"

I'm tired.
I could sleep
A hundred nights at once.
Could you sleep that long?
Could you?

—David P., age nine

"When are you happy?"

It's a good feeling—
When the teacher says,
"You may go out." Or
"You get an A on your report card."
Getting a rabbit, or
Your dog having puppies. Now,
You are ten years old—
It's a good feeling.

—Tammy, age nine

Often, I suggest to children they put a frame around their poem. Tammy chose "It's a good feeling"—this framing of the poem gives it shape and sets it apart as a completed piece, a record.

I don't feel like anything—
Just plain nothing.
I feel like nothing,
Nothing at all.

—Hilda King, age nine

A very simple statement of boredom, of ennui, of transition, of feeling like myself—the ambiguity or connotations of the piece make it a poem; the repetition of "nothing"; the honesty of the emotion expressed.

Other feeling poems:

I feel like a passage way
With people walking along me.
When I eat, I feel like lots of diamonds
Sparkling in the cave. When I go swimming
In the ocean, I feel like a frozen ice cube.
—Link M., age eight

I have a feeling for a watermelon.
I have a feeling for a pony.
I have a feeling for a fish.
I have a feeling for animals.
I have a feeling for a boy.
I have a feeling for a dog.
I have a feeling for Daddy.
I have a feeling for Mother.
I have a feeling for everything.
The world makes me happy.
Everything in the world makes me happy.
You can sit in the world.
—Paul C., age eight

I want to get away from them.
I want to get away.
I want to go to the mountains.
—Dewayne G., age eight

Awful!
Makes me want to go to bed.
In bed, I would play with monkeys.
They go to sleep. They dream
Of other monkeys playing in trees.
If I was a monkey I would play in trees,
Play hopscotch and jumprope.
When I was born I wished I was a monkey.
—Joy, age six

I AM GOING TO CRY

I got a spanking and I cried.
Tears came from my eyes.
I went outside and played
King of the Mountain. I played House.
And I get dizzy on a high hill.

—Group Poem, Elementary Reading

FEELINGS

I would like to be playing cowboys.
Cowboys kill people.
It wouldn't feel good to be killed.
I wouldn't like to be killed. But
I wouldn't kill nobody—
Just shoot animals except horses,
I wouldn't shoot them.
I wouldn't shoot nothing like a horse.
I would ride a horse to home.
I would keep it on the Point.
I'd give it water and feed every day.

—Billy, age six

FISHING

Fishing is a fun thing.
It's the happiest thing
If you catch one.
I like to catch fish.

—James Smith, age nine

I am glad I am in my family.
I love my sister.
I love my daddy.
I love my mother.
I love my dog.
My dog is black and white.

In the classroom, there are so many things to learn we do not have time for feelings, or very little time. Children soon learn adults have a difficult time with feelings, and adults become nervous when a child expresses feelings contrary to the ones which the adult thinks the child should have. Wouldn't the world be a much more organized place if we were all stoics?

Emotions, feelings change. They become fixed only when the organism has become inverted. Children, if you can observe them before the process of inversion has taken over, acknowledge this fact—they can fight with another child one minute and the next moment be best of friends; the child's feelings are more concentrated than the adult's, for the adult has learned to "control" himself. If the child is to be a healthy adult he must be allowed to express his feelings—if not in tearing up the room, then, in painting, in words, in poetry, in play, in games. Play is the most important activity in a child's life—here he creates his own universe and peoples it with his characters. All art is play.

LONELY

I am lonely.
I never stay at one school
For more than two years.
I am lonely.
I miss my old friends.
I am lonely.
There is nothing to do
Without friends.

—Bruce, age ten

HOW I FEEL

I feel sad and lonely.
I feel sick.
Sometimes I wish I was dead, dead, dead.
I go to my room and lie down on my bed.
My bed is soft, my room is pretty.

If you've ever been this way
You know what I mean.

If a child is allowed to feel, to experience all the emotions openly, then he does not begrudge others their feelings and he can "feel" for others—not a pity and sorrowing for, but a stepping out.

ME

I am me.
I like things
Like rocks and stars
And animals.
I do.

—Sharon Brady, age eight

A stepping out, a feeling for, an experiencing of the world around her. The child can look at himself again and see how beautiful he is.

My eyes is like a sun.
My eyes can see a long ways.
My teeth is like white stone.
It doesn't care what I eat.
My stomach hurts sometimes.
When I eat too much—
That is when my stomach hurts.

My nose is like two tunnels
Going in a cave.

The child can, from himself, step out to others. So, the teacher who is willing to follow the progression from self into self to self to other will be rewarded for his efforts. Without making any kind of lesson out of the journey, the teacher might at some point in the school year present the child with copies of all these poems (those recording this), legitimizing all these emotions.

MY FRIEND

My friend is very funny.
He is very smart.
But when he is lonely,
He lies in his bed.

—Eddy Lane, age nine

I have a girl friend.
She told me how to swim
And I love her for it.
I told her how to ride
A motorcycle and I showed
Her my friends. I love her.

—Eliff Dunn, age ten

If the child is having difficulty with a particular feeling, then, as teacher do not erase the feeling, but teach the child how to play with the feeling—how to subdue the feeling and turn it into something more than exploitation.

Down
Down
Down
That's what I am
Down
Down
Down
Down in the blues.

I wish
I were
Up
Up
Up
High.

—Tammy Wagner, age nine

Playing with the words, playing with the placement of the words—*Down* is a fun-sad poem. This procedure can be gimmicky; that is, playing with the placement of the words, so don't overplay it (like alliteration, like rhyme, it is both very easily done and done poorly). If there is a place for feeling in the classroom and the child's emotions are acceptable, this legitimate person will, in turn, legitimize others.

LLOYD

I like Lloyd.
I can hold him.
I can feed him.
When I talk to him,
He laughs. Lloyd is crippled.
He still is good.

—Gayle Smith, age nine

THE WORLD AROUND US

How does a child see the world?

You can love persons.
You can love a dog.
But most I love
The little bird
That sits on the wall.

—Steve Keefe, age ten

The trees the bird the animal,
I love them most of all,
But more of all of them together,
I love the glowing stars.

—Karen Roach, age ten

Here, in two simple poems, Karen and Steve have touched on the importance of animals for children. In Steve's poem, he has given a concise statement of the wonder we experience in the face of the wild animal, of the untamed pieces of our world. An excellent way of initiating a conversation with children concerning animals is to relate experiences of yours from the circus. "Why are animals taught tricks? Why do we cage animals and put them on review? Do we attempt to make animals behave in manners which we find acceptable—behaviors approaching our own? How do you feel about animals? Let's write a poem about our feelings for animals, any animal, or a special animal. Do you have a pet? Maybe you would like to write about your favorite animal?"

HORSES

When I ride my horse
I feel wild. I feel more alive
When I am riding in a field.
I feel free—as free as the wind.

—Donna

MY DOG

Once I had a dog,
But now I forgot his name.
I only had him a few days.
I had to give him away.
But now I have some cats
And now I have two friends.

Children move from themselves into other worlds—into the world of animals, into the world of things, into the world of friends.

MANY THINGS

I have many things
Like toys. I play
and play with them.
But it is not without my friend
to play with me. She is my best friend.
Her name is Carol.

—Glenda K. Best, nine

Now, isn't it necessary to give the child some structure? I think in most cases it is preferable to allow the child to structure his writing for himself. The teacher does not abandon the child, but rather than tell him what to do with his poem, the teacher serves as a guide. Helping the child over rough spots, asking questions about what the child has written so far and giving suggestions or cues. One does not necessarily improve a skill by repetition alone—write, write, write. There has to be some interaction with the people around us for our skills to develop. If the teacher prepares the proper atmosphere (a general feeling of acceptance—of what I say and do is important) then many children find it advantageous to discuss openly their writing as they work on it, sharing problems and ideas with their peers and with their teachers.

Another possibility for the human-animal attraction is to ask the children to pretend they are another animal, any animal—what would they do, what would they want, how would they feel. This is an opportunity for the child to disguise himself in the guise of an animal.

MY HORSE

I am a horse.
I live where there is flowing water
And green, green grass. There is a garden.

One day, I got into the garden.
And I was punished. No supper.

That next night, I was out of trouble—
I got watermelon.

—Mike Clemons, age eight

A BEAR

I am a bear.
I'm big and black.
I am very fierce and mean.
I catch fish and eat them.
When I catch the fish
I feel brave. When I see fire
I run to the other bears.

—Chris Curtis, age nine

I AM A CAT

I am a cat.
My fur is brown
And black and yellow.
I run faster than a dog can.
When I get tired I run
Back in and fall to sleep.
I am pure velvet soft.
When I wake up
I run and play again.

—Debbie Adair, age seven

A DOG

If I was a dog I would be nice
To my puppies. I would eat dog food.
I would dream of my puppies.
I would sing to my puppies.
I would understand things.
I feel hot.

—Donna Kerbey, age nine

Suppose you could be another animal—what would you like to be? What would you do?

GREEN BIRD

If I were a green bird,
I would build a nest.
And have some children.
I would teach them to fly.
One would be purple,
One would be blue,
One would be green like me.
I would sing in my tree.
I live above a house,
Where children play,
And everyday I would sing to them.

—Sherri Willis

A HORSE

I wish I were a horse,
That can run faster than me.
I wish I were a horse,
So pretty, so pretty to see.

—Cindy Sanders, age nine

A RABBIT

I wish I were a rabbit
So I could eat some radishes
And I would hop
And I would nibble on a flower.

—Tina, age eight

I WISH

I wish I were a dog
and I had a million bones.

I would bark all day
and sleep all night.
I would rattle my chain
and catch flies.

—Tony Price, age nine

When writing poems with children, I ask them to do two things—

1. Tell me something I don't know.

2. Tell it in a new or different way, in your way.

Don't repeat facts you have learned, but tell me your own feelings about what you are writing. To the first rule, "Tell me something I don't know", Chris Walker responded:

You didn't never know
that the sky is 3,000 feet high.
I wonder if you let go a balloon
If it would ever get all the way up.

Children often answer this first rule with information such as—"My name is Jane Smith, I bet you didn't know my name"; or "My phone number is 462-2126"; or "I weigh fifty-nine pounds."

We laugh and tell about ourselves. I ask them, "I might not know these facts about you, but where could I find them? Where could I find your telephone number? How could I discover your name?

"We can all discover these about each other, but no one can discover some of your feelings, some of the ways in which you see. No one sees the world as you see it—the world is different, looks different to all the world-watchers. Suppose I asked about the air, what could you tell me? Now, don't give me facts, scientific information—I can look this information up, I can discover it. Science is lots of fun, sometimes, but this isn't a science class—we're writing about ourselves. Can you tell me something about the air in a new or different way? How does the air make you feel?"

THE TREE

The tree is what makes us breathe.
The green leaves give us oxygen.
The sun hits the leaves
And the oxygen falls off.
You can't see the oxygen fall,
But you do have to breathe it.

—Roberta LeRoy

Roberta's poem is a listing of scientific facts, but what does she do in the fourth line? "And the oxygen falls off." This is an exciting restating, it's imaginative, it makes sense and it arouses our interest. What is it like to stand under a tree and have all this oxygen falling off on you?

Children will naturally use metaphor and simile, simile especially—it is built into the language. Simile is the linguistic method we use to determine sense experience. We say this is like that, we associate. Metaphor and simile, as terms, can be introduced to the children if you so desire, but words such as *comparison* or *relation* serve. I would often ask the children to tell me about their relationships. They would tell me they had kinfolks. I would respond, "How are you related to the people in this room?" A child might respond, "My brother is in this room," or "I have a cousin." I then asked, "Well, what about the rest of you? How are you related to everyone in this room? How are we related to everything in this room? I used to be related to beanpoles. I was as skinny as a bean pole. What are we like? We are like something else. Everything is like something else."

What is the globe like?

It is round.

What else is round?

A ball is round.

The globe is like a ball.

What can you do with a ball?

Bounce it.

What would happen if we were on a ball and someone bounced us?

What is the ceiling like? (a roughly plastered ceiling)

It is rough.

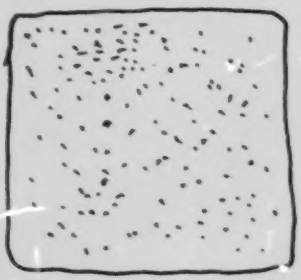
Bumpy.

Dirty.

What else is rough?

The ground.

Is the ceiling like the ground? Is the ceiling like a piece of sandpaper? Suppose the ceiling were a giant piece of sandpaper. What would you sand with a giant piece of sandpaper?



THE WORLD, A GROUP POEM (Fifth Graders)

People are like little specks in the mist of a great
big ball
That is full of magic and miracles.
The world seems like a head
Twirling, whirling around the sun.
The world is big and round with trees and palms
And lots of peace, and lots of towers.
The world is like a pin cushion
And we are all the pins.

This is like that.
This is that.

NAMING

How many names do you have for the things in your world?

Such a question can lead to the writing of poems and to the process of thought (one does not preclude the other, neither does one suppose the other). Such a discussion goes:

Look around the classroom.

Find an object.

This

- for instance . . .

What do we call this?

A desk.

What is its use?

Write on it.

Can you do other things on it?

Yes. You can build models on it.

Then, could we call it a construction area?

Who sits in the desk?

We do.

Do you always want to sit in the desk?

No.

Then, could we call the desk a prison?

A jailhouse.

It is a kind of jail, a kind of cage. How do you escape from this jail?

If you turn the desk upsidedown what does it become?

If you were to throw the desk across the room . . .

Broken!

A missile.

It can become a missile. What is a missile?

This kind of exercise with the students can go from this labeling to other supposition.

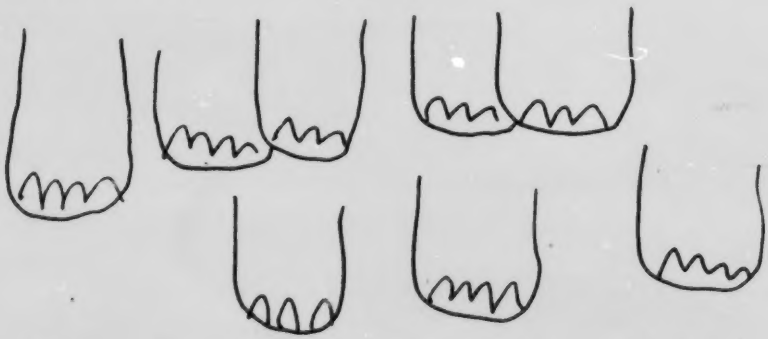
IMAGINING

What would it be like to jump over the freeway? Suppose one were given a pair of springs for jumping over interstates . . .

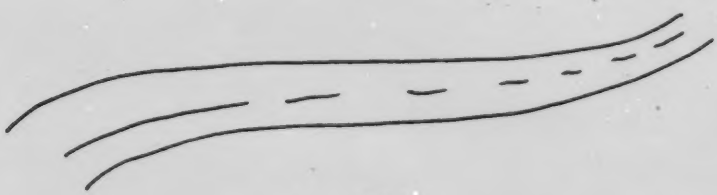
What would it be like to fly under the ground? Suppose one were given a pair of wings for flying inside the earth . . .

What would it be like to live in a world without schools? Suppose one were given a permanent excuse from school . . .

If you were to wake up with ten elephants in your room, what would you do?



Suppose you could ride down the road on a gold-plated motorcycle, where would you go? How would you feel? What would other people do when they saw you?

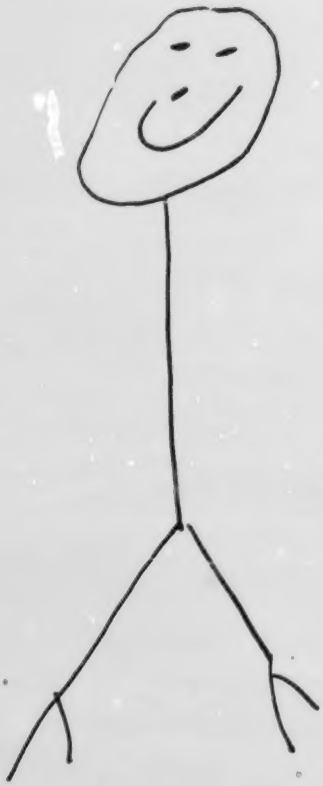


How many opportunities do you provide in your classroom for writing and speaking? It is no wonder so many children cannot speak coherent English, they spend most of their time in the classroom filling in blanks, writing T or F, working in workbooks and listening all day to someone say, "Be quiet." When I was a classroom teacher, I had to ask myself, "Why are we doing this? Am I allowing these children to learn, or am I simply filling up my day with busywork activities?" So, when a teacher has answered me "Why, the children in my classroom get all the talking they need outside the classroom—at home, on the playground", I am perplexed. If this is the teacher's attitude, it would be better for the teacher and the students not to have a classroom. For the important thing here is not talk of itself, but the formation of ideas with words—the teaching of the thought processes, the enabling of imaginative expression by the giving of vocabularies. Simply talking gets us nowhere—we require some guidance, some pointing.

We say to the child, "Do not write, do not speak." We spend our time making up tests that are easily graded, and oftentimes I have taken tests myself that were prepared twenty years prior to the exam.

How much note writing goes on in your classroom? Probably some of the most creative writing in the school takes place behind the teacher's back. If a child is to learn to speak, to write, to think, then he must be allowed and encouraged to spend most of his time in the classroom

writing, speaking, thinking—writing his own words, his own dreams, his own imaginings, his own ideas. If a child is to speak the language, he must be allowed and encouraged to spend most of his time talking. Once he has done this and expression becomes somewhat fluent, he is ready for the teacher.



Most animals
Are like plain old animals.
One only one animal
Is like a person.

IV.

WRITING WITH OLDER STUDENTS

Middle School and Senior High Poets

Writing With Older Students

WHAT TO WRITE

The students will write from their concerns and feelings if they know you will accept any subject matter. Students, ages thirteen through eighteen, write poems of love, death, conflict. They express their fears and their happinesses. In the school day, there are very few opportunities for the students to express their feelings, emotions, desires—constructing poems gives them a chance to deal with these feelings. The student saves himself while hiding within the poems he writes. The problem then for the older student is not one of subject, but one of language and form.

In many instances, the students come through school with the idea of poetry as greeting-card verse. Poetry with no form other than rhyming words (and the placement of these is haphazard) and no sentiment other than sugar-syrup. The features of a poem, those differentiating it from prose are its use of rhyming words, its archaic language fragments, its separatedness from life (from their lives) and every line begins with an upper case letter. And well this might be since their diets in grammar school have been one-sided, inane, often pious and platitudinous. This is not poetry. It might be called verse, but even that serves to elevate this crap.

I am of the mind to believe that if we are to enjoy living,

we do not sugar-coat life, we do not deny part of life by never mentioning it. We do not enjoy living by refusing to live. A good poem is a piece of us. It is neither necessary to sit around under oaks chronicling our demise, nor is it necessary to deny our demise. We can enjoy our living by our living. A poem does not need a moral (as this is used by many) since a poem is moral by its nature.

If a student trusts you, he will write his feelings. And it is necessary for the teacher to build trust and to establish the possibility for trust. If this takes place in the classroom there will be no problem with the *what* of writing.

IMITATION AND INITIATION

We learn through imitation. We see what those around us do, then we try it for ourselves. This principle of learning is at work in the classroom as well. The best writers are the most voracious readers and vice-versa. If we are to write well we must have adequate and excellent models.

The problem of form, of putting ideas, thoughts, emotions onto the page is given a partial solution by models. I found in my work with teenagers, poets, such as Bogan, Kees, Williams, Wright, Patchen, Merwin, read many times to them, reproduced in mimeographed form and

given to them in books offered excellent models for beginning writers. Evidence this imitation of Bogan's *Train Tune*:

ROUNDING THE TOWN

Going round
Running round
Turning round
Walking round
Going to town
Town is going
Walking round
Round is rocking
Rocking the town
Town is rocking
Rocking round

—Lee Carr, junior high

The student poems will reflect their readings. If we are to have good poets we must furnish good models. All too often, the poets selected for literature texts are not sufficient and often are inferior poets, and important poets such as Bogan, Wright, Patchen are not to be found. The student can move from direct imitation to initiation of his own forms through the use of models.

CLEVERNESS AND CUTENESS

Clever and inventive are synonymous in my head—a clever turn, an interesting thing to do. The cleverness should be toned down and sublimated to serve the poem, but the clever student is the creative student. Cleverness is often a good remedy for pomposity. The clever student is the innovative student. Often, the teacher's task is to

show the student that cleverness by itself is only cleverness—the clever turn is the turn that works in the poem. Today, cleverness is often fought. Many poets avoid what they consider to be clever. I suppose it is a matter of semantics, but I consider the trait of cleverness an essential one for anyone interested in words.

Cuteness—no! While I was a youngster, all the teenagers around me were waying, "Oh, isn't that cute!"—cute was the in-word; then, something happened, the in-word became meaningful; then, relevant. In a poem, something can be silly, can be crazy, can be surreal, but it cannot be cute.

I wish
wish
wishwell
wish well
wish thoughtfully. . . .

These beginning lines of a poem by a high school student are clever, they are not cute. They are interesting. What saves these lines is their plain language, well used.

GENERALIZATIONS AND THE SPECIFIC

The use of place, of the first person, of local detail gives a poem meaning to the individual writer—these also enable the reader to understand the poem, to read the poem.

179

A cotton patch—little flowers!
We played hide-and-seek.
I hid behind a bunch of branches
With cotton on it.

Not—

"Cotton patches are lovely".

Or—

"The country is beautiful."

Words such as *time, silence, beautiful* are difficult to use and usually do not belong in a poem.
Allow the reader to participate in the poem—do not engulf him.

WRITING WITH FORMULAS

I, personally, do not like rigid formulas. I do not know what a student gains from haiku or cenquain other than as a fleeting exercise. These are stale, constricting recipes. There is nothing invalid about constraint—trying to write in iambic pentameter can be a helpful exercise; but I avoid the sonnet, say, unless the student has been writing for some time and wants to become more competent with the forms of English poetry; otherwise, you tend to turn many students away from poetry. The forms of English poetry developed over centuries in an on-going process—if the form was made usable for the poet, he amended it in some way and made it his own. My position is somewhere between the one which believes you cannot teach a person to write poetry and the one which

gives the writer a recipe for the writing. The following are suggestions for writing. They have worked well with junior high and high school students. These are general guides which the students and I developed as we worked together. They are intentionally ambiguous and are at the same time adaptable to any student's perceptions.

RULES FOR WRITING POEMS AND FOR READING POEMS

I walked into many classrooms and directed the students, "Write a poem". With no other direction or comment, they wrote. These poems (or blank pages) showed me where the students were, what their conception of a poem was, how skilled they were in writing. We then began from this point with these guides.

1. *Tell me something I don't know.* Demand this of any poem you read or write. We think scientifically—this is a light bulb, its power source is electrical current, it is a sixty-watt light bulb, it screws into a socket. How can we talk about this light bulb? What can we say about it that we do not know? Is the light bulb like anything else? What does it remind you of? What does it do? Are there other things in the universe which do the same?

Often students would be upset with this first demand—"Something you don't know? How do we know what you

know?" Or, "My name is _____, my phone number is _____, now, you didn't know that did you?" And I would respond, but where could I find it? Any information about the world can be researched. Tell me something that only you know. Tell me your feelings. Tell me your world. Tell me what it is like for you to be living. Tell me how you see those around you. Talk about the common things we have, but—

2. *Tell it in a new or different way, in your words.* In the classroom, we spent quite a while thinking of clichés, of idiomatic expressions, of expressions we use, have incorporated into our vocabularies without thinking about them. "I feel blue." How can this be said in a new way? You as the speaker are the creator—when do you "feel blue"? how does it feel? what is it like to "feel blue"? what do you do?

At first clichés and pat phrases were accepted in the student's writing if he used them, but he was pressed to express these differently with an emphasis on an invention of words, phrases of his own.

What is this?

Have you ever seen a mammalian heart? Does this look like a heart? How do we know this is a heart? Why do we call it a heart? What does this picture represent?

What is this?

When some one has a broken heart, is there actually some sort of crack in the heart muscle? Why do we call this a broken heart? When do you experience a broken heart?

3. *Does the poem ring true? Is it honest?* How can you relate this poem to your experience? We found through the analysis of popular songs we became more aware of meaningless generalizations. One song in particular helped here. The song begins, "Everything is beautiful. . . ." Does this ring true? Is everything beautiful? Is an automobile wreck beautiful? Is flu beautiful? Could you accept this statement—"Everything is ugly"? But the song's phrase continues with "in its own way". How does this qualification change the statement? With such discussions, we were able to move from generalizations to specific descriptions of our lives. We moved from statements such as "Freedom is _____" to personal experiences and observations, answering questions such as,

"What is it like to be free?" Li Chou Ching's poem, "Alone In The Night", (Rexroth translation) helped very much with this point.

A poem rings true when we say what we see rather than

saying what we have been told to see. This rule in no way rules out fantasy.

4. *Does the poem say anything to us today, here in this room?* We read poems aloud, we listened to the language. We mimeographed the student poems and read them. Most of our time in the classroom was spent writing and hearing. I asked these questions: "On what level(s) does this poem speak to us? Does it speak to all of us? What does it mean to you?" In this manner we were able to hurdle (some of the time) the problems of criticism for the students. For them, criticism meant negation, and often times it does. They either liked something or they did not like it. This is an honest response as far as it goes. I carried this a step further, without destroying their responsiveness, "Why do you like it?" "Why do you not like it?"

Whenever possible, give the students a variety of poems from which to choose. Allow them to select poems which speak to them. Simply because a poem is printed in a textbook does not make the poem valid for a certain student.

5. *Rhythm.* I entered the room speaking in a monotone, pronouncing each syllable distinctly, giving each syllable the same amount of time. We went from here, usually listening to favorite recordings and repeating simple sentences in as many different rhythmic patterns as we could come up with.

It is rhythm that carries a poem to our ears. And it is rhythm that causes us either to shut off the sounds coming in or to open ourselves to the experience produced by the beatings of words. Rhythm was established as the central tool in the craft of making poems. Silent reading of poems is never suitable—a poem is made to be heard. It is not necessary to go into meter and measuring, although helpful at times, but it is necessary to point out rhythmic patterns. If a student experienced problems with rhythm, I would ask the student to write any line he wished, such as "I don't know what to write". After the line was on paper, I asked the student to say the line several times until he was able to establish the rhythm of the line in his ear, and then, to build a short poem around this first line and its rhythm.

6. *Metaphor-Image*. Rhythmic patterns are not enough, almost enough, but not quite sufficient. How does one express one's emotions and ideas in a poem? We explored. We attempted to say something in a new or different way, in our own words. We tried for metaphors, both powerful and simple.

The rain is so funny,
Playing, splashing the pebbles,
Moving them back and forth,

Sounding like the sound
Of chicken frying in a pan.

—Jackie Johnson

seize me
imprison me
within the lines
or hold me captive
between
that I may live
forever

—Helen Wortman

7. *Mystery.* What do you understand? What do you not understand? How many words do you have for one object? Do we name our world in order to control it? Does our language shape our thoughts? How can we, inside the poem, communicate some of the mystery of our lives?

8. *Humor—some quality of the absurd.* We learned to laugh at ourselves laughing at ourselves. We played with words and learned to enjoy the queer English language. For instance, if you, as writer, are prone to melancholic subject matter, you can lighten or intensify your poems through the sounds of the words, the plays on words, turns and juxtapositions.

IDEAS FOR THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

A poem is built from images. Select an image, after a thorough investigation into sense perception.

How do we see?	How do we hear?
What do we see?	What do we hear?

The senses receive information, but for this information to be meaningful to the man, he must connect the information received with the store of information in his brain. This is usually done through the process of speech and the speech connection is usually in the form of a simile. "The cloth feels like a cat."

Select any image. With a group of junior high students I choose "flowers of the sky". I asked the students to identify these, to express some emotion, and to relate something they see at the moment or have seen.

Small flowers blooming
A happy feeling comes to me
A robin dashes by

—Lesa Johnson

The sun shines brightly down upon the quiet desert.
The feeling of joy comes to me.
My cat is eating a bird.

—Shawn Collins

A patch of lavenders is framed by white clouds
Against the pale blue sky.
They are moved by the wind.

—Annette Allen

The rain is beating down on the blade of grass.
I am sorrowful for it.
An ant is crawling on the brick.

—Annette Allen

A plane blocks the warm rays of the sun.
I look up. Something like flowers
Is being thrown out. One of the flowers
Alights beside me. I pick it up.
It is a paper announcing
The Spring Sale at Rich's.

—Twyla Green

The clouds take the shape of flowers
Dancing merrily across the sky.

—Fran Chadwick

The clouds,
A field of flowers
Moving round the globe.

—Karen Phillips

Birds, the flowers of the sky—
All different shapes and colors,
Some in flocks, some alone,
Some in pairs. Beautiful wild flowers—
Each one, a different story.

—Julie Alderman

a wedding with people throwing flowers up (and
rice)
in the sky everyone's happy throwing daisies
up
in the air yellow eyes and white petals

a little girl picking daisies
picking the petals saying he loves me
he loves me not ending on he loves me—
She just tossed the flower she had down
On the ground, picking up another
One to see if it ends upon, He loves me.

—Wanda Clemons

Write about something you like to do. Many times we have the mistaken idea that poems have to be about beautiful things such as flowers, trees, birds, but they can be about almost anything—about minibikes, about auto races, about football, about car wrecks, about school, about frogs. Write about anything you wish, but make it something you like.

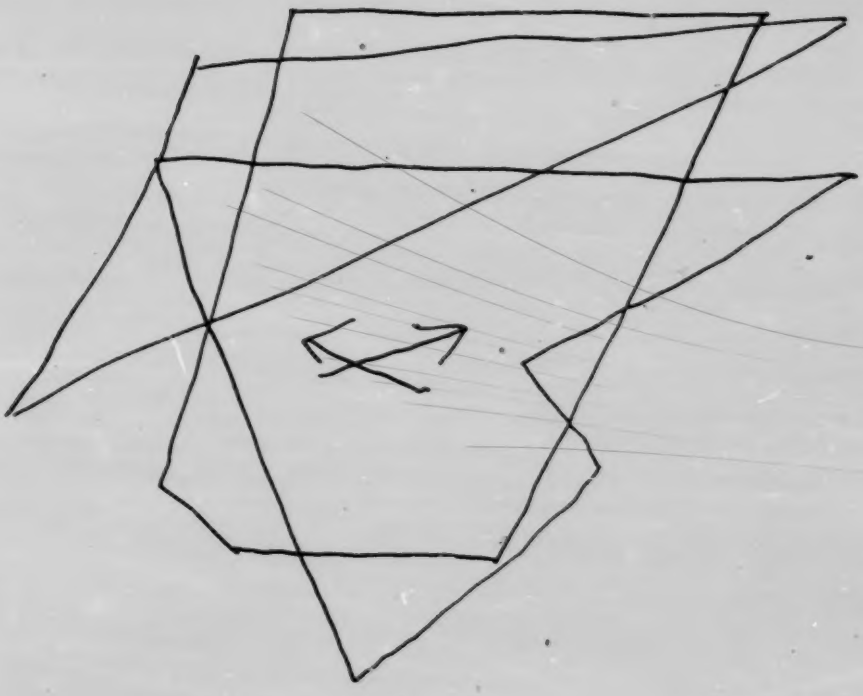
I LOVE WRESTLING

I love wrestling—
The great feeling you get
When you learn a new move
Or win a match, or get
A take-down. Wrestling
Is the only way
I really get pleasure
Out of getting tired,
Or working hard—
Trying to learn a move
Or combination of moves.

—Gary Smith

I like to sit in a cool breeze
And feel it hit against my face.
The breeze feels good—
Like when you ride on a motorcycle
Or sit in the back of a pickup truck.

—Bobby Martin



Read short Chinese poems to the class. Point out the ways in which oriental poets seem to juxtapose observations and personal feelings. Ask them to observe something in the universe and without using "I feel" in the poem, give their poems a feeling of depth in relation to the object observed. As in these anonymous poems:

Even though the writers trust you, junior high students are reluctant to sign their poems. They are often worried about peer approval.

THE TREES

The trees are big and tall.
Their leaves die helplessly.

WIND

The wind is howling through the trees.
Blowing leaves upon the ground.
Now, the ground is covered.

THE MOON

The moon is like the roundest apple.
But then, it is also bright.
But not so bright nor round as the sun.

WIND SONG

A whispering wind
Blowing long and far
Throughout the land—
And never dies.

SILENCE

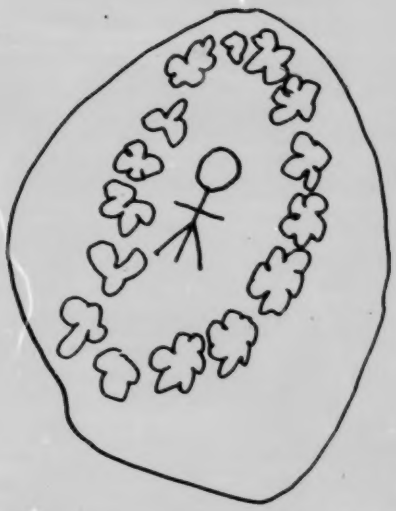
I hear silence moving through the stars and the planets,
The stillness, the softness, and I gather
There is a movement among the rocks,
Moving around the sun like clocks.

I see a man standing in the park
Looking at the sky
As if it were the last time.

—Jane Sivley

Jane signed her poem. If the teacher does not force the issue, the students will begin to sign their work.

One of the best ways to interest students in writing and reading is to establish a literary magazine written, edited and produced by the students. It is, however, most important that the students be given some help and critical information from a well-informed adult. I find it necessary to make this statement after seeing some of the sentimental jibberish contained in student publications. Do not rush into the publication of a literary magazine—wait until the students are ready to exercise some editing ability other than seeing their friends' names in print.



ADDITIONAL POEMS FROM JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS

I AM A BIRD

I am a bird. I fly high, low, around—
So, hold me, hold me and don't let me go.

I'll never leave your side
for day or night.

—Randy A.

THE BIRDS ARE THERE

The birds are there—
More heard than seen,
Like a whippoorwill in the night.

—Russell Carpenter

A LITTLE ROBIN

There was once a little Robin,
Who would always come to my window
And say "Winter is here." And
"I'm cold. So, take me and feed me
Because I'm a little Robin."

--Edith Chapman

I watched the sun glisten through the clouds.
It was bright and blinding as it opened the day.
It melted the night-cool ground.
I rode by in a car.

—Joey Horton

DREAMS

The wind began to blow
And I lifted up my head
Then felt my body lifting
Up, up, up.

I floated to a fair
Where ferris wheels were spinning
I didn't have any money
So I landed in a seat.

Boy, oh boy, how cool—oh!
To ride a ride for free.
I float back up and land again
On another ride for free.

—Marcella Patterson

A snowy hillside is very still
Like a pool of water, unmarked
By trees or rocks, roads or people.
No footprints or sleigh tracks
Mark the white ground.

—Johnny West

I saw a little bird
as it swept into the sky.

—Karen

I'd be willing to bet there are
Other things smarter than us.
By the way, have you looked under your bed?

—Spencer Fjeld

SOCCER

I like the sport of soccer.
I like it when the cool air is blowing
And when the ball comes over the heads
I kick the ball into the goal.

MEN ON THE MARCH

Men on the march sound like the guns
On battleships in deadly cannonade.
The sargent yells, "Hup, hup, hup!"
While the guns go, "Boom, boom, boom!"

School is a mosaic
Of good, bad, and no opinion.
Each day all of us learn something new.
Some like it, most don't.
I'm in the middle.

—Charles Steinhice

THE MOON

The moon is like the sun
Shining in the dark,
Like a balloon pitched into the sky.
The moon is something beautiful,
Though many never know.

THE RIVER

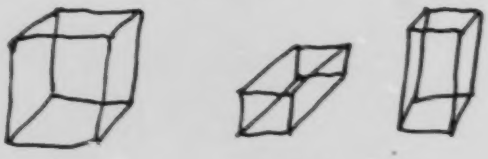
He fights a constant struggle for life,
Running, dodging through fields and cities,
Dashing across rocks,
Raising a frightful uproar.
The time is spent in vain,
For everywhere there are men
Who wish him dead, machines of death,
Poisons of unspeakable horror.
So, helpless, he suffers
A gradual and agonizing death.

—Robert Wortman

A WORD WALL—
A PROJECT FOR THE HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM

1. Materials needed: glue, tape, scissors, newspapers, construction paper, unlined paper, magazines. Use any pictures and printed pages you have on hand. Ask the students to bring old magazines and newspapers from home.

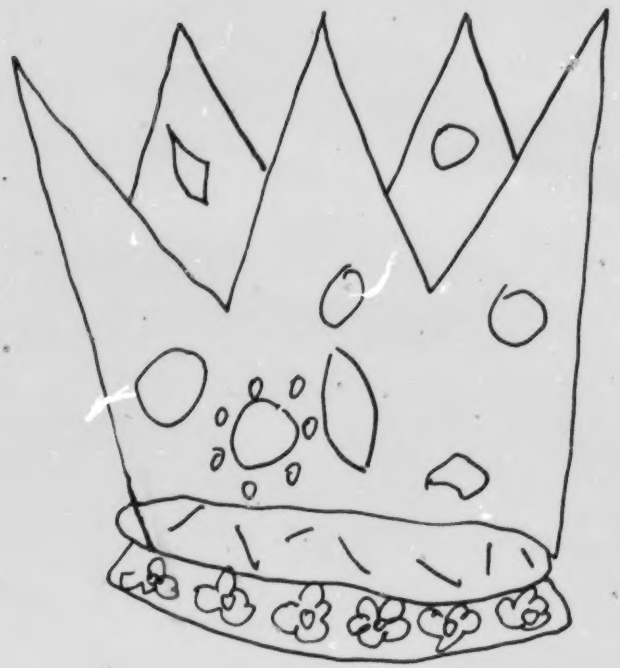
2. At various stores, collect cardboard boxes.



3. After showing the students examples of collage, ask each of them to choose paper, box and magazines and newspapers and begin work collecting letters, words, photographs.

4. Attach these to the sides of the boxes collected. A good idea is to have each student responsible for one box—only the front side need be covered; the other sides

can be painted or left plain. Or a different poem-picture could be attached to each side so that you could change the boxes each day, producing a different word-wall. This backdrop makes an excellent setting for poetry readings by your students.



POEMS FROM HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

I WISH

I wish
wish
wishwell
wish well
wish thoughtfully
that someone would notice.
Some one human being would notice me and
my craft.
Up beyond sparrows, up beyond just plain sky.
Why doesn't someone say? "Look up there.
Look how fast it goes. How quiet it is.
How, how shiny it is."
I hope and dream and wish on the ground.

—Vernon Adams

THE MOON

The moon is round
Round as the sun.

The moon is not hot
But the sun is.

The moon is all alone
All alone in the sky.

The moon has known stars around it
But the moon has light.

Oh, how good the moon looks.

—Andy Morgan

The sun, a rising rose
Stretching, finally opening
Over the expanse of springs.

The rose outside the cell
Caught only by glimpses,
As I jump to the window.

In the winter, when it faces the window.

—Debi Shay

The blades of grass
Reach up like fingers
Out of the soft whiteness
To touch the golden sun.

—Cindy Brown

SNOW

Last night small ballerinas
Dressed in white danced
To the music of the wind.

Today they are sleeping
And tomorrow—
They will be gone.

—Mark Lawforn

The dull tones surround us.
The continuous drumming
Sounds drifting through the mind,
Drifting through the mind,
Through the mind.

—Debbie Smith

THE SNAKE

Thunder of green
And the only thing seen
Are the streaks
Of the
Snake's
Red and white eyes
Constant in motion
To and
Fro.

—John P. Burns

THE RAIN

The rain is so funny,
Playing, splashing the pebbles,
Moving them back and forth,
Sounding like the sound
Of chicken frying in a pan.

—Jackie Johnson

Passing on your right,
Young man,
Is a historical site
Classified as a point of interest
In my yellow manual.

—Helen Wortman

ZOO

The unsatisfied animals upset me
Almost as much as those who are content.
If I were there, in the places
Where flying popcorn and gaping faces
Always confront me, would I pace
Back and forth, or would I simply go
About my business? Which kind
Of oblivion would I choose?
Strange that I cannot answer that,
If I knew what I was doing now,
Sitting in class, confronted
By gaping faces and flying remarks?

—Eunice Belew

Flow with the stance
Of the wind,
Glisten off the rays
Of the sun,
Watch the spindle
As it still touches
The silky softness of its length.

—Elaine Earhart

The wind blows scattering the leaves.
Snow falls.
Snow melts.
Seedlings bud.
The earth is green.

—Debbie Smith

In the early morning
A child dies
In a cold street
And someplace, way
Over the ocean,
Some child won't starve,
Because I ate my peas
And carrots.
I just read a story about
A war, and in it
Everyone was killed.
And when I got up this
Morning with the snow
Outside, I thought—
What a beautiful day
For going outside!

—Michael Roach

The brown leaves
Race past my house—
As I watch them tumble
Can I help but think?
Of faces and their possessions,
Minds dull and slow moving,
Fast and intelligent.
Some even going backwards—
Against the wind,
Gentle leaves as they wander
Down the road,
Groups banded together
By the wind.
Quickly now they blow away.
I strain to see them
From my window.

—Charlotte Woy

Why should today end?
rain, spider web
in a rainbow of color,
rain falling in
to the stream.
The sun, the light,
warmth.

It seems
the snow is alive
with warmth.

—Buffy Hoge

The stars above shine brightly
Showing all the world
The planets
Which are so mysteriously unexplained.

—Claudia H.

The sun passes as the night
Comes up to us with clutching fingers.
Lost, scared, why did the sun go down?
No thought in mind, blank is my heart.

—Steve Arnold

You try to see inside the cave
To read the jumbled hieroglyphics
It's sad that you will only know
That which I choose to let you see
You catch each echo in a jar

A baseball bat
is like an elephant nose.

V.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A resource listing of helpful books and major American Poets.

Bibliography

The books included in the bibliography are books I know. There are other books of equal merit—this is a beginning. Most of the books listed are followed by short evaluations.

Index for this Chapter

	page
1. Aids in the teaching of writing for elementary grades	147
2. Anthologies of children's writing for elementary grades	148
3. Anthologies for the elementary classroom	149
4. Aids in the teaching of writing for junior high school	150
5. Anthologies of children's writing for junior high school and high school	150
6. Anthologies for junior high school students	151
7. Aids in the teaching of writing for high school	152
8. Anthologies for high school students	155
9. General education	157
10. Odds and ends—mostly paperbacks, useful for stimulating student interest in poetry (high school level)	157
11. Good textbooks for high school	159
12. Spanish-speaking poets in bi-lingual paperback editions	160
13. Heterogeneous listings: A. For high school students	161
B. For teachers	165
14. Major American poets, a partial listing, Walt Whitman to the present	166

1. Aids in the Teaching of Writing for Elementary Grades

Applegate, Maurice, *Winged Writing, Imaginative Poems and Stories of School Children from Grades 4 through 8*. Evanston, Row, Peterson and Company, 1961. (hb)

Fair

Arnstein, Flora J., *Children Write Poetry, A Creative Approach*. New York, Dover Press, 1967. (pb)

Excellent

Brown, Rosellen; Hoffman, Marvin; Kushner, Martin; Lopate, Phillip; and Murphy, Shelia, Eds., *The Whole Word Catalogue*. New York, Teachers and Writers Collaborative, 1972. (pb)

Good; address: The Teachers and Writers Collaborative, c/o P.S. 3, 490 Hudson St., New York, N. Y. 10014

Fenwick, Sara Innis, Ed., *A Critical Approach to Children's Literature; the Thirty-First Annual Conference of the Graduate Library School, August 1-3, 1966*. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1967. (hb)

Good, in part

Haviland, Virginia, and Smith, William J., Eds., *Children and Poetry*. Washington, D. C., Library of Congress, 1969. (pb)

A listing of books of poetry for the classroom, write Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20402. Price: minimal

Note: Abbreviations: hb, hardbound; pb, paperback.

Hopkins, Lee Bennett, *Let Them Be Themselves, Language Arts Enrichment For Disadvantaged Children in Elementary Schools.* New York, Citation Press, 1969. (pb)

Poor, to fair

Koch, Kenneth, *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams, Teaching Children to Write Poetry.* New York, Chelsea House Publishers, 1970. (pb and hb)

Some good ideas, though formula-ridden

Larrick, Nancy, Ed., *Somebody Turned On A Tap In These Kids, Poetry and Young People Today.* New York, Delacorte Press, 1971. (hb)

See also: Livingston, *What The Heart Knows*
Lewis, C., *The Poetic Language of Childhood*
Kuskin, *Talk To Mice and Fireplugs*
Lewis, R., *A Dialogue of Poetry*
Merriam, *I, Says The Poem*

Perry, Walter T., and Bowen, Mary E., *Slithery Snakes and Other Aids to Children's Writing.* New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts/Meridith Corp., 1967. (pb)

Fair

2. Anthologies of Children's Writing for Elementary Grades

Baron, Virginia Olsen, Ed., *Here I Am! An Anthology of Poems Written by Young People in Some of America's Minority Groups.* New York, E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1969. (hb)

Good

Larrick, Nancy, *Green Is Like A Meadow Of Grass, An Anthology of Children's Pleasure in Poetry.* Champaign, Garrard Publishing Co., 1968. (hb)

Fair

Lewis, Richard, Ed., *Miracles, Poems by Children of the English-Speaking World.* New York, Simon and Schuster, 1966. (hb)

Excellent

_____, *The Wind And The Rain, Children's Poems.* New York, Simon and Schuster, 1968. (hb)

Very good, essentially a book of photographs by Helen Butterfield, illustrated with children's poems.

3. Anthologies for the Elementary Classroom

Clymer, Eleanor, Ed., *Arrow Book of Funny Poems.* New York, Scholastic Book Services, Scholastic Magazine, Inc., 1965. (pb)

Minimal price. For a thorough listing of anthologies for the classroom see listing above, Haviland and Smith, *Children and Poetry.*

Cole, William, Ed., *Beastly Boys and Ghastly Girls.* New York, The World Publishing Co., 1964. (hb)

Funny

_____, *Oh, How Silly!* New York, The Viking Press, (hb)

Any anthology by Cole is bound to be good. See also his *Oh, That's Ridiculous!* and *Oh, What Nonsense,* both Viking Press.

McGovern, Ann, Ed., *Arrow Book of Poetry.* New York, Scholastic Book Services, Scholastic Magazine, Inc., 1965 (pb)

Minimal price

4. Aids in the Teaching of Writing for Junior High School

Applegate, Mauree, *When The Teacher Says, "Write A Poem", A Book for Junior High School Students.* Evanston, Harper and Row, Publishers, 1965. (pb)

Fair

Hughes, Ted, *Poetry Is.* Garden City, Doubleday and Co., 1970. (pb)

Fair

Larrick, Nancy, Ed., *Somebody Turned On A Tap In These Kids, Poetry and Young People Today.* New York, Delacorte Press, 1971. (hb)

Also see: Jordan, *Children and the Hungering For*
Larrick, *It's Not A Joyous City*
Doty, Robinson, and Students, *Straight Talk from Teenagers*
Howe and Danish, *Experiment in the Inner City*

5. Anthologies of Children's Writing for Junior High School and High School

Adoff, Arnold, Ed., *It Is The Poem Singing Into Your Eyes,*

Anthology of New Young Poets. New York, Harper and Row Publishers, 1971. (hb)

Good selection

Jordan, June and Bush, Terry, Eds., *The Voice of the Children.* New York, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1970. (hb)

A selection of poems written by children from the city, but this is no reason to limit this selection to city readers.

Joseph, Stephen M., *The Me Nobody Knows, Children's Voices from the Ghetto.* New York, Avon, 1969. (pb)

Good selection of prose and poetry fragments.

Larrick, Nancy, Ed., *I Heard A Scream In The Street, Poetry By Young People In The City.* New York, M. Evans and Co., Inc., 1970. (hb)

One of my favorite anthologies for a student's reading, contains good photographs by students.

_____, *On City Streets, An Anthology of Streets.* New York, Bantam Books, 1969. (pb)

Photographs by David Sagarin, selection of well-known and lesser-known poets, good.

6. Anthologies for Junior High School Students

Dunning, Stephen; Lueders, Edward and Smith, Hugh, Eds., *Reflection On A Gift Of Watermelon Pickle and Other Modern Verse.* Glenview, Scott, Foresman and Co., 1969. (hb and pb)

Excellent anthology with illustrations.

_____, *Some Haystacks Don't Even Have Any Needle and Other Complete Modern Poems.* Glenview; Scott, Foresman and Co., 1969 (pb and hb)

An even better selection than the above by the same editors.

Summerfield, Geoggrey, Ed., *First Voices, An Anthology of Poetry and Pictures.* New York, Knopf, Random House/Singer School Division, 1970. (hb)

This series is The First Book, The Second Book, The Third Book, The Fourth Book, and it makes an excellent addition to any school library and can be used across the board with all ages.

7. Aids in the Teaching of Writing for High School

Auerbach, Erich, *Mimesis, The Representation of Reality In Western Literature.* Translated by Trask. Garden City, Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957. (pb)

Classical study.

Beckson, Karl; Ganz, Arthur, *A Reader's Guide to Literary Terms/A Dictionary.* New York, The Noonday Press, 1960. (pb)

Good reference book for the classroom.

Benedict, Stewart H., *A Teacher's Guide To Poetry.* New York, Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1969. (pb)

Designed to be used with other Dell paperbacks, a few interesting pieces of biographical and critical information included.

Blackmur, R. P., *Form And Value In Modern Poetry*. Garden City, Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957. (pb)

Critical studies of interest.

Dodd, Anne Wescott, *Write Now! Insights Into Creative Writing*. New York, Learning Trends/Globe Book Co., Inc., 1973. (pb)

Interesting textbook for the classroom.

Girsdansky, Michael, *The Adventure of Language*. Newly revised and ed. by Mario Pei. Greenwich, Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1967. (pb)

Good beginning linguistic history for the teacher and student.

Hamilton, Anne, *How To Revise Your Own Poems, A Primer For Poets*. Boston, The Writer, Inc., Publishers, 1945.

Out of print, but if you can obtain a copy it is worth your effort, examples a bit old fashioned, but points still valid.

Howard, Richard, *Alone With America, Essays on the Art of Poetry in the United States since 1950*. New York, Atheneum, 1971. (hb and pb)

I find Mr. Howard's style almost unreadable, but his selection of poets and some of his criticism are understandable.

Kantor, MacKinlay; Osgood, Lawrence and Emanuel, James, *How I Write/2*. New York, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1972. (pb)

Text by writers for the student.

Marshall, Carol; Miers, Jr., John A., *Designs For Reading Poems*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1969. (pb)

Part of a series, Designs for Reading Plays, . . . Poems, . . . Short Stories, . . . Nonfiction Prose.

Morse, David, *Grandfather Rock, The New Poetry and the Old.* New York, Delacorte Press, 1972. (hb)

Traces popular lyrics back to their sources in poetry.

Nemerov, Howard, Ed., *Poets On Poetry.* New York, Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1966. (hb)

Essays by poets, some fair pieces.

Norton, James H., Gretton, Francis, *Writing Incredibly Short Plays, Poems, Stories.* New York, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1972. (pb)

Good lengthy section on poem making.

Perrine, Laurence, *Sound And Sense, An Introduction to Poetry,* Second Ed. New York, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1963. (pb)

Good sound introduction to the reading of poetry.

Perry, John Oliver, Ed., *Approaches to the Poem, Modern Essays in the Analysis and Interpretation of Poetry.* San Francisco, Chandler Publishing Co., 1965. (hb)

Informative.

Philips, Judson; Carter, Lawson and Hayden, Robert, *How I Write / 1.* New York, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1972. (pb)

Text by writers for the classroom, there is a part two, listed above.

Ribner, Irving; Morris, Harry, *Poetry: A Critical and Historical Introduction.* Chicago, Scott, Foresman and Co., 1962. (pb)

Good historical sketch and selection through the

romantic period, a bit thin after.

Skelton, Robin, *The Practice of Poetry*. New York, Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1971. (pb)

Good reading for teachers interested in writing with their students.

Wimsatt, W. K., *The Verbal Icon, Studies in the Meaning of Poetry*. Lexington, Kentucky Paperbacks, 1967. (pb)

Good critical pieces with which to quarrel.

8. Anthologies for High School Students

Barnstone, Willis and others, Eds., *Modern European Poetry, French, German, Greek, Italian, Russian, Spanish*. New York, Bantam Books, Inc., 1966. (pb)

Excellent

Berg, Stephen; Mezey, Robert, Eds., *Naked Poetry, Recent American Poetry in Open Forms*. Indianapolis, The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1969. (pb)

Good selection of poets, includes pictures of poets and short biographies.

Cole, William, Ed., *Eight Lines And Under*. New York, The Macmillan Co., 1968. (hb)

Good selection of short poems, wide range of poets and poetry.

, *Pick Me Up, A Book of Short, Short Poems*. New York, The Macmillan Co., 1972. (hb)

Very good.

, *Poetry Brief, An Anthology of Short, Short Poems*. New York, The Macmillan Co., 1971. (hb)

My favorite of Cole's "short-short" anthologies.

Hall, Donald; Pack, Robert and Simpson, Louis, Eds., *New Poets of England and America, an Anthology*. Cleveland, Meridian Books, 1957. (pb)

Good selection.

Hall, Donald; Pack, Robert, Eds., *New Poets of England and America, Second Selection*. Cleveland, Meridian Books, 1962. (pb)

Good selection, more from the same editors.

Immaculate, Sister Mary, C.S.C., *The Cry of Rachel, An Anthology of Elegies on Children*. New York, Random House, Inc., 1966. (hb)

Good selection.

Payne, Robert, Ed., *The White Pony, An Anthology of Chinese Poetry from the Earliest Times to the Present Day, Newly Translated*. New York, Mentor Books, n.d. (pb)

Issued originally by Day Co. in '47, good selection.

Rexroth, Kenneth, *One Hundred Poems From The Chinese*, New York, New Directions Books, 1971. (pb)

The Rexroth translations are a real joy, excellent.

_____, *One Hundred Poems From the Japanese*. New York, New Directions Books, 1964. (pb)

Excellent

Steele, Frank, Ed., *Poetry Southeast: 1950-70*. Martin, (Tenn.) Tennessee Poetry Journal Paperback, 1968. (pb)

Excellent; with the death of Mooney we lost an important press and poetry journal.

Williams, Oscar, Ed., *The New Pocket Anthology of American Verse, From Colonial Days to the Present*.

Newly revised by Hyman J. Sobiloff. New York, Washington Square Press, 1972. (pb)

Subtitle indicates the scope of this selection. the volume is packed and well worth its minimal price, though, some importants are omitted.

9. General Education

The following are highly rewarding books:

Bruner, Jerome, Ed., *Learning About Learning: A Conference Report.* Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966. (No. 5,212,12019) (pb)

Cole, Michael; Gay, Glick Sharp, *The Cultural Context of Learning and Thinking, An Exploration in Experimental Anthropology.* New York, Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1971. (hb)

Chomsky, Noam, *Problems of Knowledge and Freedom, The Russell Lectures.* New York, Pantheon Books, 1971. (hb)

Kneller, George F., *Introduction to the Philosophy of Education.* New York, John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1964. (hb)

Schrank, Jeffrey, *Teaching Human Beings, 101 Subversive Activities for the Classroom.* Boston, Beacon Press, 1972. (hb)

10. Odds and Ends—Mostly Paperbacks, Useful for Stimulating Student Interest in Poetry (High School Level)

Balek, William, *Sons of Innocence and of Experience* (poems). New York, Bard Books/Avon, 1971.

Bogan, Louise, *The Blue Estuaries. Poems: 1923-1968* (poems). New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968.

Brooks, Gwendolyn, *Selected Poems* (poems). New York, Harper and Row, Publishers.

cummings, e.e., *100 Selected Poems* (poems). New York, Grove Press, Inc., 1959.

Dupee and State, Eds., *Selected Letters of e.e. cummings*. New York, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1969. (hb)

Giovanni, Nikki, *Gemini* (poems). Indianapolis, The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1971.

Hughes, Langston, *Selected Poems* (poems). New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1970. (hb)

Keithley, George, *The Donner Party* (book-length narrative poem). New York, George Braziller, 1972. (hb)

Merwin, W. S., *The Lice* (poems). New York, Atheneum, 1969.

_____, *The Carrier of Ladders* (poems). New York, Atheneum, 1971.

Pasternak, Boris, *Letters to Georgian Friends*. Translation by Magarshack. New York, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1967. (hb)

Patchen, Kenneth, *Sleepers Awake* (poem-novel). New York, New Directions, 1969.

_____, *The Journal of Albion Moonlight* (poem-novel). New York, New Directions, 1961.

_____, *Collected Poems* (poems). New York, New Directions, 1968.

Ramsey, Paul, *In An Ordinary Place* (poems). Raleigh, Southern Poetry Review Press, 1965.

_____, *A Window For New York* (poems). San Francisco, Two Windows Press, 1968.

_____, *The Doors: Poems of 1968* (poems). Martin (Tenn.), Tennessee Poetry Press, 1968.

Read, Bill, *The Days of Dylan Thomas: A Pictorial Biography*. Photographs by Rollie McKenna. New York, McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1964.

Roethke, Theodore, *Words For the Wind, the Collected Verse* (poems). Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1961.

Sexton, Anne, *Transformations* (poems). Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1971. (hb)

Steiner, Nancy Hunter, *A Closer Look At Ariels: A Memory of Sylvia Plath*. New York, Harper's Magazine Press, 1973. (hb)

Stevens, Wallace, *Poems* (poems). New York, Vintage Books, 1959.

Swenson, May, *Iconographs* (poems). New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970. (hb)

Williams, William Carlos, *Selected Poems* (poems). New York, New Directions, 1963.

_____, *The Autobiography of*. New York, New Directions, 1967.

Wright, James, *Saint Judas* (poems). Middleton, Wesleyan University Press, 1959.

11. Good Textbooks for High School

If you are adopting literature texts, I suggest a careful look at the following excellent ones:

Kitzhaber, Albert R., General Editor, *The Oregon Curriculum / A Sequential Program In English*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

Miller, O'Neal, McDonnell, General Editors, *Man In Literature, Comparative World Studies In Translation; Literature From Greek And Roman Antiquity; Russian And Eastern European Literature; Translations From The French; Italian Literature In Translation; Black African Voices; Literature Of The Eastern World; From Spain And The Americas; Teutonic Literature*. Chicago, Scott, Foresman and Company.

Sparke and McKowen, *Montage: Investigations In Language*. The Macmillan Company.

> This book's concept and design make it an excellent text for the creative writing class or for any English classroom.

Zweigler and others, Eds., *Man In The Fictional Mode; Man In The Dramatic Mode; Man In The Poetic Mode; Man In The Expository Mode*. McDougal, Littell and Company.

12. Spanish-Speaking Poets in Bi-Lingual Paperback Editions

Lorca and Allen, Eds., *The Selected Poems of Federico Garcia Lorca*. New York, New Directions, 1961.

Matilla and Silen, Eds., *The Puerto Rican Poets / Los Poetas Puertorriquenos*. New York, Bantam Books, 1972.

Neruda and Vallejo, *Selected Poems*. Bly, Ed. Boston, lated by Tarn. New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966.

_____, *Selected Poems*. Translated by Bellit. New York, Grove Press, 1961.

_____, *A New Decade. Poems 1958-1967*. Translated by Bellit and Reid. New York, Grove Press, 1969.

Neruda and Vallejo, *Selected Poems*. Bly, Ed. Boston, Beacon Press, 1971.

13A. Heterogeneous Listings—For High School Students

The following is a personal listing of books which have been important to me and which I think have many lessons to teach in that they communicate a mastery of language, of style, and of image:

Novels

Arnow, Harriette, *The Dollmaker*. New York, Collier Books, 1961. (hb)

> A novel of the craft of wood carving, superficially; it is in fact the story of a woman's struggle, the difficulty of creation; set in Kentucky and Detroit.

Beckett, Samuel, *The Lost Ones*. New York, Grove Press, Inc., 1972. (pb)

> This short "novel" of some sixty pages shows the literary form stripped beyond its bones with pieces of the skeleton missing. The laconic style offers a closer analysis of the importance of each word.

Bowen, Elizabeth, *The Death of the Heart*. New York, Vintage Books. (pb)

> This book has been criticized for being "too well written". It is well written and a major example of

the psychological novel. It deals with the passage from childhood.

Cather, Willa, *My Antonia*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company/Sentry Edition. (pb)

I have always had a fondness for Willa Cather's work and have often been kidded for the same. Once after attending a reading by William Stafford, I walked up to Mr. Stafford and rather than comment on his reading, asked, "What do you think of Willa Cather?" He quoted a passage from *My Antonia* in response. See also *My Mortal Enemy*.

Kafka, Franz, *The Trial*. Translated by the Muires and Butler. New York, Schocken Books, 1968. (pb)

This edition would be of special interest to students since it includes unfinished chapters, passages deleted from the manuscript by Kafka, postscripts of the first three editions by Max Brod, excerpts from Kafka's diary and a few drawings by Kafka—offering an insight into this author's work and the construction of this powerful novel.

Keller, Gottfried, *A Village Romeo And Juliet*. Translated by Thomas and Morgan. New York, Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1966. (pb)

A short, well-constructed retelling of the Romeo and Juliet story set in 19th century Germany. Interesting comparison to Shakespeare's play.

McCullers, Carson, *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe and Other Stories*. New York, Bantam Books, Inc., Modern Classic Ed., 1969. (pb)

"The Ballad of the Sad Cafe" is one of the most perfectly constructed novellas of modern time. The

language is beautiful. In the same volume, the short story, "Madame Zilensky and the King of Finland", could furnish much discussion in a classroom—fantasy and reality, fragility of contact. See also Albee's stage setting of "Ballad."

Rolvaag, O. E., *Giants in the Earth, a Saga of the Prairie*. New York, Harper Torchbooks, 1964. (pb)

Excellent writing, particularly of what the prairie did to some of the early settlers—psychologically and physically.

Ruber, Johannes; *Bach and the Heavenly Choir, A Modern Legend*. Translated by Michael. New York, McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1964. (pb)

An amusing short novel about a pope who wants to canonize Bach.

Wolfe, Thomas , *Look Homeward, Angel*. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons. (pb)

Some interesting language.

Drama

Beckett, Samuel, *Waiting For Godot, A Tragicomedy in Two Acts*. New York, Grove Press/Evergreen, 1954. (pb)

Ionesco, Eugene, *Exit the King*. Translated by Watson. New York, Grove Press/Evergreen, 1963. (pb)

, *Rhinoceros and Other Plays*. Translated by Prouse. Grove Press/Evergreen Original, 1960. (pb)

Non-fiction

Carson, Rachel, *The Sea Around Us*. Revised Edition. New York, Signet Science Library, 1961. (pb)

De Beauvoir, Simone, *A Very Easy Death*. New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1966. (hb)

Eiseley, Loren, *The Immense Journey*. New York, Vintage Books. (pb)

Hamilton, Edith, *The Greek Way*. New York, W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1964. (pb)

Kazantzakis, Nikos, *Report to Greco*. Translated by Bien. New York, Bantam Books, Inc., 1966. (pb)

Shaw, Anna Moore, *Pima Indian Legends*. Tucson, The University of Arizona Press, 1968. (pb)

Thoreau, Henry David, *Walden and the Essay on Civil Disobedience*. New York, Lancer Books, 1968. (pb)

Van Gogh, Vincent, *Dear Theo, The Autobiography of Vincent Van Gogh*. Edited by Irving Stone. New York, Signet Books, 1969. (pb)

Short Stories

Blake and Hayward, Eds., *Dissonant Voices in Soviet Literature, Post-Revolutionary Russian Writing*. New York, Harper Colophon Books, 1964. (pb)

Chekhov, Anton, *The Image of Chekhov. Forty Stories in the Order in which They were Written*. Translated by Payne. New York, Vintage Russian Library, 1966. (pb)

Kafka, Franz, *The Great Wall of China. Stories and Reflections*. Translated by the Muires. New York, Schocken Books, 1970.

_____, *The Penal Colony. Stories and Short Pieces*. Translated by the Muires. New York, Schocken Books, 1961. (pb)

Mansfield, Katherine, *Stories, Selected, and with an Introduction by Elizabeth Bowen*. New York, Vintage Books, 1956. (pb)

Pilnyak, Boris, *Mother Earth and Other Stories.* Translated and edited by Reck and Green. Garden City, Doubleday Anchor Books, 1968. (pb)

Poe, Edgar Allan, *Eighteen Best Stories.* Edited by Price and Brossard. New York, Dell Publishing Co., 1965. (pb)

13B. Heterogeneous Listings—for Teachers

Artaud, Antonin, *The Theater and Its Double.* New York, Grove Press, Inc., 1958. (pb)

Buber, Martin, *The Legend of the Baal-Shem.* Translated by Friedman. New York, Schocken Books, 1969. (pb)

_____, *Tales Of The Hasidim.* Early Masters, 1947; Later Masters, 1948. Translated by Marx. New York, Shocken Books.

Camus, Albert, *Lyrical and Critical Essays.* Translated by Kennedy. New York, Knopf, Vintage Books, 1968. (hb and pb)

Esslin, Martin, *The Theatre of the Absurd.* Garden City, Anchor Books, 1961. (pb)

Krutch, Joseph Wood, *Henry David Thoreau.* New York, A Delta Book/Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1965. (pb)

Merton, Thomas, *Raids on the Unspeakable.* New York, New Directions, 1966.

_____, *Zen and the Birds of Appetite.* New York, New Directions, 1968. (pb)

Pater, Walter, *The Renaissance, Studies in Art and Poetry.* New York, Mentor Books/New American Library, Inc., 1959. (pb)

Shestov, Lev. *Athens and Jerusalem*. Translated by Martin. New York, A Clarion Book / Simon and Schuster, 1968. (pb)

Wiesel, Elie. *Souls On Fire: Portraits and Legends of Hasidic Masters*. Translated by Wiesel. New York, Random House. 1972. (hb)

14. Major American Poets, a Partial Listing, Walt Whitman to the Present

Walt Whitman
1819-1892

Herman Melville
1819-1891

Emily Dickinson
1830-1886

Sidney Lanier
1842-1881

James Whitcomb Riley
1849-1916

George Santayana
1863-1952

Gelett Burgess
1866-1951

William Vaughn Moody
1869-1910

Edwin Arlington Robinson
1869-1935

Edgar Lee Masters
1869-1950

Stephen Crane
1871-1900

Amy Lowell
1874-1925

Gertrude Stein
1874-1946

Robert Frost
1875-1963

Carl Sandburg
1878-1967

Vachel Lindsay
1879-1931

Wallace Stevens
1879-1955

William Carlos Williams
1883-1963

Sara Teasdale
1884-1933

Elinor Wylie
1885-1928

Ezra Pound
1885-1972

H. D.
1886-1961

Marianne Moore
1887-1972

Robinson Jeffers
1887-1962

John Crowe Ransom
1888-

Conrad Aiken
1889-

Edna St. Vincent Millay
1892-1951

Archibald MacLeish
1892-

Mark Van Doren
1894-1973

Charles Reznikoff
1894-

e. e. cummings
1894-1962

Louise Bogan
1897-1970

Malcolm Cowley
1898-

Hart Crane
1899-1932

Allen Tate
1899-

Oscar Williams
1900-1964

Yvor Winters
1900-1968

Ogden Nash
1902-1971

Langston Hughes
1902-1967

Arna Bontemps
1902-1973

Countee Cullen
1903-1946

Richard Eberhart
1904-

Louis Zukofsky
1904-

Robert Penn Warren
1905-

Stanley Kunitz
1905-

Kenneth Rexroth
1905-

Byron Vazakas
1906-

W. H. Auden
1907-

Frederic Prokosch
1908-

Theodore Roethke
1908-1963

James Agee
1901-1954

Charles Olson
1910-1970

Elizabeth Bishop
1911-

Kenneth Patchen
1911-1971

J. V. Cunningham
1911-

Hyman J. Sobiloff
1912-1970

Woody Guthrie
1912-1967

Robert Hayden
1913-

Muriel Rukeyser
1913-

Delmore Schwartz
1913-1966

Karl Shapiro
1913-

John Berryman
1914-1972

Randall Jarrell
1914-1965

William Stafford
1914-

Weldon Kees
1914-1955

Gwendolyn Brooks
1917-

Robert Lowell
1917-

william Jay Smith
1918-

May Swenson
1919-

Edwin Honig
1919-

Robert Duncan
1919-

William Meredith
1919-

Howard Nemerov
1920-

Richard Wilbur
1921-

Howard Moss
1922-

James Dickey
1923-

Alan Dugan
1923-

Anthony Hecht
1923-

Louis Simpson
1923-

John Logan
1923-

James Schuyler
1923-

Daniel G. Hoffman
1923-

Denise Levertov
1923-

Gene Baro
1924-

Vassar Miller
1924-

Robert Huff
1924-

Edward Field
1924-

Donald Justice
1925-

Carolyn Kizer
1925-

Kenneth Koch
1925-

Allen Ginsberg
1926-

Robert Creeley
1926-

Robert Bly
1926-

W. D. Snodgrass
1926-

James Merrill
1926-

David Wagoner
1926-

William Burford
1927-

Galway Kinnell
1927-

Henri Coulette
1927-

James Wright
1927-

John Ashbery
1927-

W. S. Merwin
1927-

Anne Sexton
1928-

Philip Levine
1928-

Donald Hall
1928-

Burns Singer
1928-

Donald Peterson
1928-

Robert Pack
1929-

X. J. Kennedy
1929-

Alvin Feinman
1929-

Jonathan Williams
1929-

Adrienne Rich
1929-

John Hollander
1929-

S. S. Gardons
1929-

Donald Finkel
1929-

Melvin Walker la Follette
1930-

Gary Snyder
1930-

George Starbuck
1931-

Sylvia Plath
1932-1963

Ronald Perry
1932-

Stephen Berg
1934-

Leroi Jones
1934-

Robert Mezey
1935-

Saint Geraud
1940-1966

Nikki Giovanni
1943-

For a complete listing of poets writing in America today see: *A Directory of American Poets* including names and addresses of 1300 poets and contemporary writers whose work has been published in the United States. Published January 1973 by Poets and Writers, Inc., 201 West 54th Street, New York, New York 10019. This paperbound volume includes an excellent "Service Section" listing anthologies, films, tapes, and various other information.

For a representative selection of poets and poems written in the last years in the South see: *Poetry Southeast*, complete listing above.

Animals are smart.
I've been to the zoo
And I know that!

VI.

MORE POEMS FROM THE CHILDREN

and he is so Strong
He can tear curtains
off walls

—Mitchell, age six

A HORSE

He runs very fast as the wind.
He can jump fences over things.
"too!" He is very gentle.
He lets you feed him "too!"

—Charles Nickerson, age nine

her soul is an aphid
of spring
and flowers
the rough bark
of the apple tree
and feathers
gliding
to the ground

—Helen Wortman, senior high

ORANGE LOBSTER

I am a bright orange lobster.
I eat rocks at the bottom of the sea.
Sometimes I swim the surf.
I sing a very quiet song.
I dream I am a human.
I feel very hard.

—Steve Clark, age nine

The light bulb bothers me
When I look at the lightbulb
It makes everything turn green
After I look at the sun

—Carl Sexton, age nine

THE WORLD

how
The world
is round as round
as a ball it has a
round ball around
if it was round-
er it would roll
right out of
the sky

—Mark N., elementary

POPCORN

It hops like a rabbit.
It goes skip. It's like snow
And yellow and white.
It's like a little fellow.
Like a fairy.

—Carl Sexton, age nine

NEST

I wish I was a bird
Where I could fly every day.
I wish I was a crow
Where I could build a nest
And lay five eggs a day.
Where I could have five babies
To take care of.

—Jack Scott, age seven

KITTENS

Kittens are soft,
Soft as a ball of fur.
Kittens are happy.
Kittens are black. Brown,
White, spotted, too.
The fur is soft, I think.

—Rebecca Ann Yoder, age ten

Come someone, play
With me and my rats,
So I don't have to do
The dishes, so I can
Have lots of friends
(Or all be mad). I want
To have lots of friends.
I wouldn't care
If I had ninety friends,
Just so I would have someone
To play with.

—Susan Tate, elementary

GO AWAY DOG

Go away, leave me alone.
Go away, don't come back.
Stay away.
Go away and don't come back.
Let me think.
Leave me alone, let me think.
Let me think to myself.
Because you won't let me think,
I am going to my room.
Quit it, dog!

–Brad Odam, age nine

MY DOG

Once I had a dog,
But now I forgot his name.
I only had him a few days.
I had to give him away.
But now I have some cats
And now I have two friends.

—Elementary student

I don't sit by the window
But I hear the trucks and everything
Out the window, in the classroom
I like to hear the phone ring.

—Ann Whittenberg, age nine

OUR GAME OF BALL

We have a fuss every Wednesday night
When we lose the game and get real tight.
We brag of ourselves and make a fuss.
And do not know that we're in a fight.

—Michael Hall, age nine

I lay there still.
Unmoving.
My arms and legs
Remain still,
But now,
I move closer.

—Mike Cain, senior high

A fish lives in the water.
The fish get cold in the water.
The fish like to live in the water.
Some of the fish are like others.
Big fish can eat little fish.
The little fish are real little.
They need to eat. The little ones need to live.
Or they will die. I saw a big fish.
The fish is big.

—Scott, age seven

MY HORSE

My horse is soft as ribbon.
I love my horse. He is colorful.
I love him. I take him food.
He loves me. His name is Salt.

—Devonna Ellis, age eight

I like to ride horses.
I think it's fun.
I like to go bump, bump, bump.

—Deedra Taylor, age ten

THE LITTLE RAIN DROP

I saw a little raindrop.
It was only one falling down.
Before it fell on the ground,
I ran in the house and got a jar.
I caught the raindrop in the jar.
I took it in the house and showed it
To everybody. They said I could keep it.

—Dean Young, age nine

MY CAR

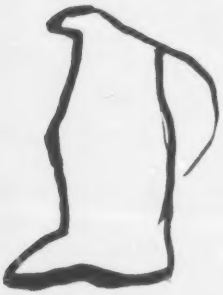
My car is fast fast fast
and zoom zoom zoom
My car goes.

—R. Curtis, age nine

TURTLE

I eat plants.
I dream water.
I have a long neck.

—Elementary Student



I'm tired.
I could sleep
A hundred nights at once.
Could you sleep that long?
Could you?

—David P., age nine

If I were crazy
I would go and hide.
I wouldn't want anyone to hear me.
I would talk to myself.

—David B., age six

I WISH, I FLY

I wish I could fly
So high up in the air
And let my hair blow
In the breeze.

—Kim Lawson, age nine

A LITTLE BABY SNAKE

I saw a little baby snake.
He curls up funny.
My mother is more than scared of them.
But snakes do not scare me a bit.
I saw a little baby all curled up—
He looked like a fancy bed spread.

—Carla Ware, age nine

WILD, FREE HORSES

Wild, free horses running about,
Wandering in the rocky lands,
Wandering about the mountains,
Galloping on golden hooves,
And golden mane blowing in the wind.
Wild, free horses.

—Letetia Douglas, age nine

LITTLE BUG

A little crawling
Through the grass.
Climbing over huge rocks
As big as he is.

Walking through the grass,
like a little baby
lost
in a city
on the busiest day.

—Junior High Student

Eagles eat big fish,
Big fish eat little fish,
Little fish eat worms,
Worms eat mud.

Worms and mud need soil,
Fish need to live in water
And eagles have to have nests.

—Grant Stamps, age nine

PEOPLE

A man who runs and jumps
Is sometimes called an athelete.
And sometimes he does it
For a living
And sometimes,
He does nothing at all
And then,
He would be called a tramp.

It's something magic
When you see the rain fall
And the trees blow
And the water
Running from the falls.

The leaf falls down very slowly
and goes where it is very soft.

PEOPLE

He does odd and unusual things.
The way he talks is a little different.
He acts different. Writes unusual.
Makes things seem real when he talks.
Things seem more different.

MY MOTOR

My motor's broke.
No one can fix it.
It's in bad shape.
The chain's broke in different ways.
It won't run. Won't hardly start.
Barely run. It's broke many ways.
I don't know hardly anything about my motor.
But I know it's broke very bad. Many ways.

TREES

Trees are very beautiful—
the green leaves
the brown trunk, and sometimes
the beautiful blossoms.

SKIING

Going skiing is like jumping
In a haystack. A haystack of clouds.
You would just go right through.

You feel like you are going up
In the sky, and sometimes down
On the ground. You see yourself
Going down a steep hill thinking
You will never come up again.

All of a sudden, Bump!
I think we hit the moon.
It's like all the dreams you could think of.

—Leslie Moore, age eleven

A small little clown
Holding up a cat

A dog ran up
And the cat ran away

—Billy Joe Swanner, age nine

Carnivals are places of laughter,
Which is really lots of fun.

You might really wish you'd stayed
Home—after the stomach ache
With the wiener on the bun.

133

OBSERVATIONS

Your feelings are lost
In the silent atmosphere.
Time seems to float around you
And dreams come to no end.
Quietness closes in on you
And thoughts are of love.
You can touch a new world
And begin to live in a fantasy—
The life you once had becomes
What you've always wanted
And loneliness is a thing of the past.

—Sandra Shaw, senior high

All of a sudden, I feel a big breeze.
Someone just zoomed by on roller skates.
I think I will skate, too. Now,
I will zoom past them.

—Jeannie M.

Screaming and yelling at a carnival
Is the only fun I have.

Some carnivals are fun
Because of the games
And some are boing
Because of the rides.
But the one I went to
Was just made for me
To get lost in.

—Bobby Locklear

GREEN GRASS

Green grass is pretty.
Green trees are tall.
The green valley is low.
The green hills are high.

—Donna F., age ten

THE WINTER

When it comes winter,
All the birds fly south.
It gets very cold.
The water freezes.
It is hard on people—
They have to get out in the cold
To get fire wood and get kids from school.
Our fathers have to get up for work.
They have to stay all day.
Rabbits do not have anything to eat.

—Darrell Morgan, age nine

I am an apple.
People eat me.

—Gail, age nine

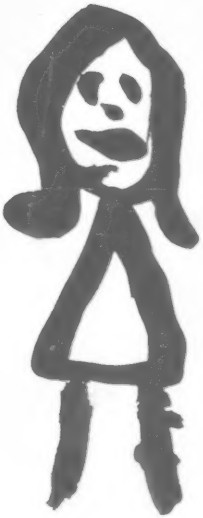
At night I will float in the Sea,
Make little crackling noises floating
On the sea, and as I float I will dream
Of how I would live on land.

—Lauri Perri, age nine

A LEAF

I am a leaf.
I go down, down and down.
I am a red leaf.
Sometimes, I am all colors.

—Toni Basham, age nine



You might not believe me,
But my dog can talk.

VII.

A SUMMING UP

Additional Pointers

A Summing Up

Poetry is recorded sense experience. This recording process involves the thought mechanisms of the brain. There is something full and rounded about the business of writing. It is a process of catching pieces of time. And as with any work of art, a good poem is a microcosm of the writer's world. Since we share the same world, part of the time, a good poem is also our world.

What sorts of conditions in the classroom enable the student to write?

1. The teacher must be creative; that is, the teacher, instead of relying upon vast resources, on outside aid, on fancy and fanciful programs, must be willing to use what is present. To make the environment work—this is the first step. No matter what the community, there are interesting people who belong in the classroom—storytellers, writers, craftsmen, musicians, "old-timers". Look to the community for resources. Involve as many departments within your school as possible. If there is a printing press in your school, use it to print the class's poems, if no printing press, use whatever machine is available (including a typing class), select certain poems to present to the local newspaper. Use the people and the materials around you. You do not have to be a consumer of the newest textbook programs available. Rather than spending money on texts or new reading programs, use what resources you have available to buy books for the classroom. (See the paperback poetry and other books listed in Chapter V.

2. All students experience something. Creative writing in the classroom should not be geared to the production of masterpieces, but to the expression of the student's experiences. As far as poetry is concerned, the students have the raw material for the construction of poems within them. It is the teacher's job to elicit this gross matter and to teach the students how to refine it, understand it more fully, and express it in the written and spoken word. How does one go about eliciting student writing?

3. It is not necessary to spend a large section of time on rules, on metrics, on style. But it is necessary to provide adequate and excellent models: e.g., adequate model—e. e. cummings; excellent model—James Wright. I think in the teaching of grammar and in the writing of poetry, fiction, and essay, time is better spent on models than upon rules; that is, one learns best by doing, by writing, by reading, not by first memorizing rules and then approaching a task. The important process is deduction: look at this poem, how is it constructed, what is it, how is it made, how does it work?—not, here are the rules for a Shakespearean sonnet, now, write a sonnet following these rules. The deduction process seemingly, may be slower, but it is deeper and more thorough.

4. A historical introduction to poetry will enable the teacher to establish essentials of poetry for the student. In actual classroom time, this historical introduction should be rather short with a list of references given to the students who want more information.

5. In the classroom, language encouragement is an essential. Many students have for their central language model a variant of the English language used on the television. Use this. Use television. Make a survey of the classroom, asking for verbatim recitations of television commercials. Or, ask students to listen carefully to commercials and to analyze them. The remembered commercials are usually those employing strong rhythms and excess repetition, often reinforced with musical settings. This analysis can go in many directions—what are the differences between propaganda and education? Have poets ever been propagandists? Students could compose their own commercials. Survey brand names—how is our language corrupted here? (Duz joy gleem klear and e-z as your leggs splash in the Kool-whipped tide?)

In the elementary classroom, parachute play is a good stimulus for language if the teacher offers the proper guidance. Old parachutes can be purchased from surplus stores. The parachute is an excellent means for combining movement, dance, language, invention, and a starter for poems.

6. Sixteen millimeter movies and color slides offer possibilities for student movie making and multi-media presentation.

7. Always ask the student for his feelings—How do you feel? In early poems, "I feel . . . "is a basic element in the poem for many students. With verbal encouragement from the teacher, such as, "In your next poem try to infuse the poem with your feelings instead of using 'I feel', select an image, a rhythm, a form which communicates your feelings to the reader", the student can move in new directions.

8. Illustrate any points you, as the teacher, make by reading from the student poems you have available. A student may be very surprised to find you taking his poem so seriously.

9. Connotative language as opposed to denotative language is an important feature of well-written poems. It is necessary to point out to the students that while they might not have had in mind when writing a particular poem what you interpret the poem to be saying, the poem contains this interpretation as well within itself; therefore, the student as poet must be very careful of his choice of words and images—he must keep his connotations under his control. But, at the same time, the student should be urged to remember the function of connotative language in the poem—this helps the student writer to focus. And this focus on connotative language as opposed to denotative language enables him to distinguish poetry from prose.

10. How does one distinguish a poem from a piece of prose:

a. feeling (words infused with emotion)
b. rhythm (rhythmic structuring of words)
c. image (appeal to the senses through words)
d. metaphor (a basic tool)

The poem relies upon the connotative aspects of the language. The other forms of literature often borrow from poetry, but they are more concerned with the denotative aspects of the language. A poet's use of connotation allows him to place his reportage within the language itself and to relate it to the world.

11. In a poem, the personal relation of the poet to the world is of utmost importance. He is bound between two possibilities—one, he will write so that his poem does not contain the personal, does not contain his way with the language; or, two, he will write so that his poem contains too personal a language, too personal an image. If the poem works, it is the poet's personal relation to himself and the world which will enable the readers of the poem to enter into the poem.

12. Metaphorical language is basic to poetry. Metaphor is a difficult tool. It involves a way of seeing—in metaphor the necessary tool for gathering sense information is overstepped, entered into completely, so that the comparison is not felt, is not needed. *This becomes that* so that neither is obscured, but seen in a new way.

13. Rhyme is one element in poetry. A child in a fourth grade class wrote, "*I don't know nothing about poetry since this is the first time I've heard about poetry—I've always heard about poems. Poems are something that rhymes and it's supposed to be something good and not bad.*" This statement reflects many of the elements of poetry as taught by a few teachers. A poem *does not* have to rhyme; a poem does not have to *not* rhyme. I found in my work with young children that rhyme obstructs what they want to express since rhyme is so difficult an instrument to employ well. With the older student, I think it is important to show him how many different rhymes are possible—true rhyme is only one rhyme. Other rhymes are as difficult to use, but they are far more rewarding (slant, alliteration, assonance, etc.).

14. The teacher serves as the guide in the classroom. For example, when a child is given paint and paper and is stood at an easel to paint—what does the child accomplish if he is allowed to smear paint at will? What does he accomplish when he is given a mimeographed apple and is asked to color it red and to stay within the lines? Both methods are counter-productive. When a child is drawing with brush and paint, all that is necessary is for the teacher to comment, to guide him—"Oh, I see you've drawn a circle. Here you are using red and here yellow. Tell me about your picture. What does your circle represent?"

15. In order for a student to write he must:

a. Trust you—you will allow him to express his emotions, ideas, himself.

b. Honor your suggestions as you honor his expression. Complete freedom of expression requires that the student know what he is expressing, requires an awareness of the language, and a structure. If a student were to write, "Time is fleeting", it is the teacher's responsibility to cause this student to express himself, not to quote someone. "Time is such a big word. What happens in time? What part of time are you talking about? How can you say this in your own words?"

c. Enter into dialogue with you. If you are unwilling to talk with the students in your classroom, you are not a teacher. A teacher talks with a student in order for the student to learn to express himself and his world in the context of the larger society.

d. Be in touch with himself and his world. A student must take himself into consideration when he writes. He must write from himself.

16. A good teacher respects the rights of the students and insists that they respect her rights and the rights of fellow students. Writing and expression cannot take place in a room filled with disrespect. A good teacher is respectable.

17. Language is not something we do for two hours each day in grammar and foreign language classes. It is *never* necessary to "talk down" to a student, to talk on "his level". It may be necessary to restate yourself, or to explain yourself, but not to degrade the student and yourself by banalities. It may be necessary to translate.

18. One last comment—help the students edit their poems. All good art is in some way or manner stylized art (this is a valid tool for judging). Help the student to see that it is not necessary to put everything into the poem. Help him to say it in the fewest words possible and in the most alive manner possible. But be gentle—do not edit the piece and the student to death. Allow the student to reject your suggestions. Give him models.

> *My mind speaks to me, my hand writes for me. I'm just there to watch as the two work together to write a poem.*
>
> *—Buffy Hoge, age fifteen*

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